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Helping councils deliver locally



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Delivering on levelling up

A record-breaking 38 bills were announced in the Queen's Speech on 10 May, which set out the Government's plans to deliver on levelling up.

The LGA will be working with parliamentarians to help shape and deliver this new legislative programme so that local communities are empowered to tackle inequalities (p10).

Following the local elections in England and Wales on 5 May, we have Professors Colin Rallings' and Michael Thrasher's analysis of the results (p30). My commiserations if you were unsuccessful, and congratulations to those of you who were re-elected or are newly elected.

The LGA's new councillor hub (www.local.gov.uk/new-councillor-hub) has a wealth of helpful information for new councillors, who can also sign up for our national new councillors welcome event on 20 June at www.local.gov.uk/events.

Elsewhere in this month's edition of **first**, we look ahead to the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate (p13), introduce this year's sector support programme for councils (p16), showcase how councils are supporting disadvantaged young people into education, employment and training (p18), celebrate the 20th anniversary of the National Graduate Development Programme for local government (p22), and outline research into the experiences of LGBTQ+ children and young people in social care (p29).

Cllr James Jamieson
is LGA Chairman



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Cost of social care for children up a quarter

Latest figures show that spending to protect vulnerable children at risk of harm has increased by almost a quarter in five years, because of soaring demand for support.

Councils in England spent more than £10.5 billion on children's social care in 2020/21 – nearly 25 per cent higher than

in 2016/17, when expenditure was almost £8.5 billion. More than two-thirds are now overspending their budgets

The LGA wants the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, yet to be published at the time of going to press, to call for a white paper by the autumn, as well as a long-term funding solution for services.

Children's services departments are currently focusing much of their resources on supporting those who are in most desperate need of help.

It means many councils are struggling to invest in the early help services that prevent families from reaching crisis point in the first place.

The figures also show that, in the past decade, the number of Section 47 enquiries (carried out when councils suspect a child is suffering, or is at risk of, significant harm) has increased from 111,700 in 2011 to 198,790 in 2021 – a rise of 78 per cent.

The number of children in care in England has also increased by 23 per cent, from 65,510 in 2011 to 80,850 in 2021.

CLlr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Children's social care services have been stuck in crisis mode for too long. We are ready to start making the changes that will improve our services and make children's lives better.

"These new figures demonstrate how hard councils are working to invest in the services children need. However, spiralling costs and increased demand mean that funding is largely supporting those in most urgent need of help.

"We continue to call on the Government to invest additional funding in the strong family help services that can prevent families from reaching crisis point."



Illegal tobacco sales exacerbating health inequalities

Smokers could increasingly turn to illicit tobacco, which can be sold for as little as half market price, to cut costs, the LGA has warned.

This would hamper council efforts to reduce smoking, and exacerbate existing health inequalities between low-income groups and the wider population, as illicit tobacco is most readily available in poorer communities where smoking rates are disproportionately high.

It also undermines the impact of tobacco tax rises, which have been found to be most effective at encouraging price-sensitive residents to quit.

The sale of cheap, illegal tobacco by rogue traders in shops, private homes and via social media resulted in a loss of £2.3 billion in taxable income in 2019/20.

Imported illegally without duty being paid, illicit tobacco also helps fund organised criminal gangs with strong links to drug dealing, money laundering and people trafficking.

Ahead of the publication of the Government's review into tobacco control, the LGA has called for investment in smoking cessation services and local trading standards provision to reduce widening health disparities, organised crime and lost revenue for public services.

Trading standards teams play a vital role in protecting consumers from illegitimate and dangerous products, and councils continue to crackdown on illegal and counterfeit tobacco.

CLlr Nesil Caliskan, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Councils are a key player in supporting the Government's ambition of eliminating smoking in England by 2030, through their tobacco control and other public health and support services. However, it is vital this review provides certainty over long-term funding."

● See p14



Record vacancies mask jobs disparity

A third of England still has twice as many jobseekers as there are vacancies, according to new research commissioned by the LGA – despite the unemployment rate reaching its lowest level for more than 50 years.

By contrast, in two-fifths of the country, there are more vacancies than there are unemployed people, making it harder for employers to fill job vacancies, holding back employment growth and potentially contributing to rising prices and inflation.

The analysis by the Institute for Employment Studies, using real-time vacancy data from Adzuna, is included in the LGA's refreshed Work Local publication.

This sets out how more targeted support, coordinated by councils and combined authorities, is needed to match employers with jobseekers, engage those who have left the jobs market, and ensure sufficient skills training is in place to meet demand.

The LGA says this would also help to reduce the growing cost of living crisis



and encourage more people into work.

Coastal areas and post-industrial regions are hardest hit by lower participation and fewer vacancies, while the southern half of the country is more likely to have higher participation and high vacancies, so is well placed to build on its pre-pandemic strengths.

The wide variation within regions and not just between them proves why locally led solutions are needed to fix our national employment and skills challenges, according to the LGA.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "The Government's 'one size fits all' national approach to employment and skills is no longer fit for purpose.

"Levelling up should mean adapting support to local needs, making it more personalised and joined-up for people seeking work, while recognising the wide variations not just between different parts of the country, but also within them."

● Work Local, see p15, p18

500,000 'waiting for adult social care'

More than half a million people are waiting for an adult social care assessment, for care or a direct payment to begin, or for a review of their care, according to a recent survey.

The LGA said the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' "alarming" survey illustrates the huge everyday challenges adult social care continues to face, and the impact on people who need care.

It is calling for a greater proportion of the new health and social care levy to go directly towards social care now, to reflect the urgency of the situation and help deal with immediate pressures.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Social care is facing significant

and sustained challenges. After years of chronic underfunding and increasing pressure, the current system is struggling to cope with demand.

"While it is positive the Government has set out longer-term reforms to adult social care, there is an urgent need to address immediate pressures facing social care in the here and now, including on capacity, recruitment and retention, care worker pay and on unmet and under-met need.

"No council wants to have to limit or reduce care and support services but, as a result of significant financial pressures and workforce shortages, councils are having to make very difficult decisions about how, and where best, to allocate available resources and capacity."

National welcome for new councillors

The LGA is hosting a virtual national welcome event for newly elected councillors on 20 June, following May's local elections.

The free event will be an opportunity for new councillors to explore what their role means; learn about challenges facing councils; meet colleagues from other councils; and learn more about the support available to them.

The session, designed to complement councils' induction support for new members, will cover a range of national issues and includes an opportunity to meet experienced councillors – see www.local.gov.uk/events to find out more and book a place.

New councillors can also access relevant information on the LGA's new councillor hub (www.local.gov.uk/new-councillor-hub).

Around 5,600 councillors were elected or re-elected to 168 councils across England and Wales on 5 May, with opposition parties making gains.

The results are used to determine the political balance of the LGA, with the political groups then using their respective methods of selection to fill the seats on policy boards and chair and vice-chair positions apportioned to them by 1 September, the start of the LGA's political year.

The Conservatives remain the largest group at the LGA, on 38.2 per cent (39.85 per cent in 2021/22) and retain the chairmanship of the organisation.

Labour now stands at 35.9 per cent (previously 35.8 per cent), with the Liberal Democrats on 13.2 per cent (12.46 per cent), and the Independents on 12.7 per cent (11.89 per cent).

● The LGA is hosting a Be a Councillor event on 7 June aimed at the general public, explaining what councils and councillors do and how they can get involved by standing for election, see www.local.gov.uk/events



In brief

Energy security

The Government has committed to building a sustainable homegrown energy system that is more secure, clean, and affordable, with the announcement of an Energy Security Bill in the Queen's Speech. The Bill will also enable the extension of the energy price cap beyond 2023. Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, said: "Regulation and support to critical technologies and innovations within this Bill are a positive step. However, fuel poverty is increasing now, and energy price hikes will further hit households in the months ahead. We need urgent efforts to decarbonise energy and insulate homes, focused on households in fuel poverty to ensure people are able to cope with the worsening cost of living crisis."

Transport Bill

The Queen's Speech has outlined ambitions to speed up the transition to electric vehicles via a new Transport Bill, but councils need clarity about their role in delivering this change, the LGA has said. Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Transport Spokesperson, said: "Councils are determined to tackle climate change and are already supporting the transition to electric vehicles. Encouraging greater use of the passenger transport network – including rail, but also buses – is an important way of tackling poor air quality and meeting net-zero targets." It was disappointing that the Queen's Speech did not give councils the powers to tackle the "scourge" of pavement parking, he added.

Mental health

The LGA is supporting reforms to the Mental Health Act set out in the Queen's Speech, in particular giving people a stronger say in their treatment and addressing rising rates of detention of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said a draft Mental Health Act Reform Bill "must recognise the crucial part councils play as local leaders". He added: "Mental health and social care have faced serious strain and underfunding for several years, leading to severely impacted services and a high level of unmet and under-met need. To ensure effective implementation, all reforms need to be fully costed and resourced."

New bill 'to empower local leaders'

The Government has set out its plans to drive local growth and empower local leaders to regenerate their areas, in a Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill.

As **first** was going to press, the Bill was progressing through its Second Reading in the House of Commons.

It will enshrine in law government 'missions' to spread opportunity, drive productivity and boost local pride, and allow every area in England the chance to benefit from a devolution deal by 2030.

The Bill also sets out reforms to the planning system, including giving communities a major say on local plans.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, welcomed the extension of devolution, noting that the UK remains one of the most centralised countries in the democratic world.

He said: "Turning levelling up from a political slogan to a reality will only be achieved if councils have the powers and funding they need to address regional inequality, tackle concentrations of deprivation, and make towns and communities across England attractive places to live, work and visit.

"To deliver on levelling-up ambitions and ensure councils can deliver the right types of homes in the right places with appropriate infrastructure, a local, plan-led system is integral."



He welcomed plans for a new infrastructure levy to be set at a local level, and to empower councils to bring vacant properties back into use. But permitted development rights – allowing conversion of offices, shops and restaurants into houses without the need to provide any affordable homes or infrastructure funding – need to be removed, so "councils can ensure the right homes are built in the right places".

Reforms are also needed to Right to Buy, to support the building of new, high-quality council housing.

● See p8, p10 and p26

'A better deal for renters'

Private sector renters and social housing tenants will enjoy additional protections as a result of new legislation proposed in the Queen's Speech.

The Social Housing Regulation Bill will strengthen the role of the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator to enable tenants to better hold their landlord to account.

In addition, the Renters Reform Bill will strengthen protections for private renters, by extending the Decent Homes Standard to the sector for the first time, and giving all renters the legal right to a safe and warm home.

It will also abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions – something the LGA and councils have been calling for the

Government to introduce since it was included in its 2019 manifesto.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "Councils want their tenants to have the security of a safe and well-maintained home with any issues quickly and satisfactorily addressed, and we are keen to continue working with councils, the regulator and the ombudsman to support the implementation of the reforms.

"A dramatic recent rise in the number of 'no fault' evictions from the private-rented sector is putting additional pressure on homelessness services, so we are glad that a plan to strengthen safeguards for private renters is finally in place, allowing renters to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction."



Consultation launched on fire service governance

The Government has reiterated its preference for fire and rescue services to be accountable to a single, elected individual, in its long-awaited fire reform White Paper.

It is consulting on a range of governance models, including ones led by police and crime commissioners, combined authority mayors, or 'executive councillors', for example where a fire service is part of a county council.

The White Paper, 'Reforming our fire and rescue service', also sets out proposals aimed at developing the skills and clarifying the roles of firefighters, and improving the professionalism of the fire and rescue service (see bit.ly/39ApfXI).

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, said: "The LGA is pleased to see the publication of the long-awaited White Paper.

"It's especially positive that government has not said it will make mandatory changes to fire governance and is consulting on a range of

governance models for fire and rescue services.

"As with levelling up, real change and improvement within the sector and communities will be more successful if local councils and fire services are empowered to decide what their local governance structure will be, based on the needs of their communities."

He added: "The delivery of a good service to the public is at the heart of the fire and rescue service, and we recognise that officers and councillors have distinct and complementary roles to play in delivering that service.

"In addition, alongside the National Fire Chiefs Council and National Employers (England), the LGA has been working on a shared ambition for the fire and rescue service in England, called Fit for the Future.

"The White Paper provides us with the opportunity to consider how these ambitions might be supported in England."

Maintained schools 'outperforming academies'



Council-maintained schools are outperforming academies, new research for the LGA reveals.

It found schools that stay with their council are more likely to perform better than those that convert to an academy, with 92 per cent of council-maintained schools rated 'outstanding' or 'good' by Ofsted as of January 2022, compared with 85 per cent of academies that were graded since they converted.

The LGA said this underlines the excellent track record of council-maintained schools, which will need to be convinced of the benefits of academisation. The Government intends to persuade all schools to become academies by 2030.

The research, which looked at school Ofsted ratings between August 2018 and January 2022, also found that only 45 per cent of academies were able to improve from 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' to 'good' or 'outstanding', compared with 56 per cent of council-maintained schools.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "What is most important is that children receive the very best education and start in life.

"While academisation can be a positive choice in some cases, these findings raise questions over whether a one-size-fits-all approach is a guaranteed way of improving results and strengthening a school's performance."

In the Queen's Speech, the Government confirmed it was acting on the LGA's call for councils to be allowed to establish their own multi-academy trusts (see **p10**).

This recognised the important role of councils as education partners and enables maintained schools to continue enjoying a close working relationship with their council.

Advice on evacuating disabled residents

The Government has announced that it will not be implementing 'personal emergency evacuation plans' (PEEPs) to ensure disabled residents can evacuate residential buildings in the event of a fire.

Instead, it is consulting on 'emergency evacuation information sharing' (EELS), which would see building owners – in the highest-risk buildings only – supply the fire service with the details of disabled residents and create an expectation that the fire service will rescue these residents (see bit.ly/3sJBbyy).

The LGA supports EELS as a fall-back option, but says it is both morally unacceptable and unsafe to say that disabled residents of high-risk buildings should wait to be rescued by the fire service.

PEEPs is a challenging concept to put into

action and the Government has accepted the LGA's proposal that a group be set up to bring landlords and disabled residents together to discuss the practicalities and find a solution.

The LGA recently shared legal advice on the impact of the Equalities Act 2010 on this issue and suggested its members take their own advice.

The advice the LGA received would render the approach the Home Office proposes unlawful in social housing blocks, and we will continue to press the Home Office to meet its obligation to provide appropriate guidance to landlords – advice that takes account of the Equalities Act as well as the Fire Safety Act 2021.

In the meantime, we advise LGA members to seek their own legal advice on PEEPs.

Hybrid meetings

Moving to a hybrid model where council meetings can be attended either online or in-person would improve the diversity of local government, according to county councillors.

In a County Councils Network poll, 72 per cent of those surveyed said this would attract more young people, ethnic minorities and women to stand in local elections, and 87 per cent wanted their councils to be able to adopt a hybrid set-up.

During the pandemic, the flexibility to meet virtually was paramount to allowing councillors and the public to attend council meetings. The LGA has been calling for this flexibility to be reinstated, so that councils “can continue to work in the most accessible and resilient way possible, especially in times of emergency, such as when there is adverse weather or flooding”.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued a call for evidence on remote council meetings that closed almost a year ago, but has yet to publish the results.

The Queen's Speech did not include a bill allowing councils to hold hybrid meetings, and no other steps have been taken by government to address this issue.



Capital finance

The Government is proposing new powers for it to investigate and take action in individual local authorities in respect of capital finance.

Actions could include imposing a borrowing limit or making a direction to dispose of a specified asset, but the intention is for the majority of councils to continue to borrow and invest much as they currently do.

Additionally, new HM Treasury guidance says the Public Works Loan Board will not make new loans to a local authority if it assesses that there is a more than negligible risk that the loan will not be repaid without future government support.

The LGA is discussing the implications of all these changes with government and parliamentarians to ensure that councils' views are represented. Please share your views with us by emailing lgfinance@local.gov.uk.

18,000 affordable homes 'lost' to permitted development

More than 18,000 affordable houses have been lost as a result of office-to-residential conversions under permitted development.

Since 2015, 73,575 new homes have been converted from offices under permitted development rights, where full planning permission is not required.

The LGA believes that permitted development rights should be removed to ensure all conversions and new developments contribute to the delivery of desperately needed affordable homes across the country.

It also says that developments that go through the planning system are subject to more stringent quality assurance, subsequently improving the overall quality of housing on offer – a key priority in the levelling up White Paper.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: “Councils will continue to play a key role in helping the nation to level up and recover from the pandemic, and that includes meeting our joint ambition with government to tackle the housing shortage and build the homes we desperately need.

“There is a need for more affordable



housing across the country, but, regrettably, premises such as offices, agricultural buildings, shops, restaurants and light industry can now be converted into houses without the need to provide any affordable homes.

“Giving planning powers back to councils will also support local ambitions to revive and reimagine high streets and town centres.

“A local, plan-led system is crucial in delivering on levelling up ambitions to ensure councils can deliver the right types of homes in the right places with appropriate infrastructure. This will ensure a mix of high-quality affordable housing that meets the needs of local communities, while giving those communities the opportunity to shape and define the area they live in.”

Workforce shortages 'affecting regulatory work'

The UK's regulatory bodies are facing workforce shortages because of a significant increase in responsibilities as a result of the country leaving the EU, the National Audit Office has warned.

A new report from the parliamentary watchdog has explored the impact of Brexit on three regulators: the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

It found that all three regulators are struggling to recruit the specialist skills needed in some areas, with HSE anticipating at least four years before it reaches the full capacity it has planned for its post-EU exit regulatory regime.

Cllr Nesil Caliskan, Chair of the LGA's

Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said the NAO report mirrored warnings the LGA issued during the pandemic and since, about the lack of professional capacity in key professions, such as environmental health and trading standards.

She added: “With the expansion of capacity needed in national regulators, there is an increased risk that councils' regulatory services, which are already stretched, will be damaged further as the local professional workforce is recruited into national roles.

“It is therefore essential that the Government ensures the right resources and support is supplied to train up the next generation of officers across the full regulatory system, to protect the future of these important roles.”

LGA22

Annual Conference and Exhibition

28-30 June, Harrogate

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Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey OBE

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The Queen's Speech: levelling up

The LGA is helping shape and deliver the Government's new legislative programme so that local communities are empowered to tackle inequalities

On 10 May, during the State Opening of Parliament, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen, set out the Government's agenda for the 2022-23 parliamentary session.

Through the speech, the Government announced a wide range of proposals of interest to local government, including measures relating to devolution, planning, council tax, education, energy, housing, health, crime and justice.

Proposals will also be brought forward which will cover business rates, data reform, public procurement, local audit and post-Brexit regulation.

Much of the legislation centres on the Government's 12 levelling up 'missions', which ministers committed to enshrining in law back in February. This meant the Queen's Speech did not bring any significant surprises.

In what could be potentially the busiest legislative programme in more than 15 years, these form part of a package of draft reforms comprising 38 bills. The previous record is held by the 2005 Queen's Speech, which contained 45 pieces of legislation.

This is in addition to a number of strategies and policy measures that were also announced.

Demonstrating the need to get such a significant package through the fixed parliamentary calendar, the Government was quick off the mark in introducing – or in some cases, re-introducing from the last Parliament – 13 bills in the same week as the Queen's Speech.

Crucially for local government, these include legislation that will be of high priority to the LGA as we lobby on behalf of councils.

*"The Queen's Speech did not bring **any significant surprises**"*

The much-anticipated Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill seeks to empower local leaders to regenerate their areas with measures covering devolution, planning and local government finance reforms.

Illustrating the Government's plans to make levelling up a tangible programme of reform, the Bill will enshrine the levelling up mission statements for at least five years, measure progress on them through new metrics, and provide for the publication of an annual report updating the country on the delivery of these missions.

Crucially for councils with aspirations of playing a part in decentralising one of the most centralised government systems in the world, the Bill will create a new model of combined authority called 'combined county authorities'.

To support these new devolution deals and make sure they can be brought forward quickly, the Bill will streamline the process of bringing forward new deals for combined authorities and enabling them to move into directly elected leadership governance models.

This is a welcome development for councils and makes good on the Government's commitment to offer all of England the opportunity to benefit from a devolution deal by 2030.

The experience of previous rounds of devolution negotiations has underlined the value of local collaboration and consensus between all partners and we



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expect the Government to continue on this basis.

The LGA will be working with councils and government to ensure that the metrics used to produce an annual report on the levelling up missions are fully consulted on and reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of communities across the country.

The Bill also seeks to bring forward some of the planning measures that were previously expected in the aborted Planning Bill, which was proposed in the 2021 Queen's Speech.

The new Bill includes measures aimed at digitalising, simplifying and standardising the local plan system and making it easier for councils to get those plans in place; introducing a new approach to environmental assessment; and a new, locally set and non-negotiable infrastructure levy.

Pavement licensing will become a more permanent feature of our high streets, and there will be reforms around the process by which street names can be altered.

New powers will be introduced to allow local authorities to bring empty premises back into use, and billing



authorities will have powers to charge up to double the usual council tax rate for second homes and homes left empty for one year, instead of the current two.

In our response, the LGA reiterated the importance of a local, plan-led system to delivering on our shared levelling up ambitions and ensuring councils can deliver the right types of homes in the right places with appropriate infrastructure.

This is why it is good to see the proposals to limit speculative development applications as part of the new simplified local plan system, and we want to work with the Government to ensure the new infrastructure levy is a success.

The LGA continues to push the importance of supporting councils to build a new generation of high-quality and energy-efficient council homes.

Other key measures in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill include proposals to enable the Secretary of State to intervene in councils' borrowing and investment activity.

This clause potentially gives the Secretary of State significant powers to intervene in a local authority and we

are seeking clarification as to what the proposals mean.

The LGA will engage with parliamentarians as the Bill progresses to ensure that councils' views on this are represented.

In line with the Government's levelling up mission to make sure every child can reach their full potential, the Schools Bill seeks to deliver a higher-performing school system.

It will implement proposals in the schools White Paper, 'Opportunity for all', published in March, which include plans to allow councils to set up their own multi-academy trusts and a new compulsory register for children not in school.

Many councillors will be familiar with the LGA's and councils' longstanding campaigns on these issues.

Overall, the principles of the Bill recognise the important role of councils as education partners and enable maintained schools to continue enjoying a close working relationship with their council where that is the preference of schools and parents.

The LGA disagrees with the proposed new direct national funding formula,

which we believe should retain an element of local discretion, allowing for councils to take local priorities and the needs of all schools in their area into account.

We are also seeking for councils, who know their local areas best, to be the bodies that hold the necessary powers to take action against illegal schools. As the Bill stands, these enhanced powers would be held by Ofsted.

The LGA looks forward to working with councils, parliamentarians and the Government to shape its proposed legislative programme.

We will be making the case that councils need the funding and powers to address regional inequality, tackle concentrations of deprivation, ensure everyone achieves their potential, and make all towns, cities and communities across England attractive places to live, work and visit.

i For an overview of, and initial response to, all the bills and other policy measures of interest to councils that were announced in the Queen's Speech, please see the LGA's full briefing, at www.local.gov.uk/queens-speech

Next steps for new arrivals



Work continues on improving support for Ukrainian and Afghan refugees



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

Councils continue to support the steadily increasing number of new arrivals from Ukraine, as the Russian invasion devastates their country.

The LGA and councils are in regular contact with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Minister for Refugees, and government officials, especially regarding the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

We continue to argue that the Ukraine Family Scheme for visas should be put on a similar basis to Homes for Ukraine, and for clear communications around re-matching new arrivals whose sponsorship arrangements have fallen through.

We also want more clarity regarding safeguarding risks and particularly around disclosure and barring (DBS)

checks, and we have highlighted the need for special funding for very high-cost circumstances, and are pressing for longer-term solutions beyond six months.

In response, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) continues to update its guidance, with new advice on recognised providers and for matching organisations, and for businesses considering making offers of employment to people coming to the UK from Ukraine.

In May, DLUHC set out plans to introduce a mechanism for councils to rematch Homes for Ukraine guests with new sponsors, in certain circumstances (see bit.ly/3yHXwhC).

It has also updated the process for raising queries in relation to Homes for Ukraine, including support with live cases, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns.

Meanwhile, the Home Office has published new immigration information about the next steps Ukrainians need to take after arriving in the UK (see bit.ly/3wiBMre).

This includes information about what Ukrainians need to do to confirm

their immigration status, and how to demonstrate their status to access work, and the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

In addition to supporting new arrivals from Ukraine, councils have ongoing responsibilities in respect of Afghan and other refugees and asylum-seekers.

The Home Office and DLUHC have jointly written to council chief executives giving details of a process for enhanced matching and resettlement of Afghan families in bridging accommodation (mainly hotels).

The letter, and an accompanying Q&A, set out the detail of the enhanced matching, confirmed the process for managing refusals of offers of accommodation, and the funding arrangements for councils.

We know councils are committed to moving families on from hotels as quickly as possible. We will continue to work through the potential impacts of the refusals policy with councils and government, pressing for earlier involvement from councils in the matching process so families can make informed choices around the options available to them.

Finally, the Home Office is consulting informally on its proposed move to a 'full dispersal' model, under which all regions will be expected to take a share of asylum seekers needing housing (see bit.ly/3yHGRek).

Migration Minister Kevin Foster met the LGA's Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group in May, at which members welcomed the move to a more equitable and place-based and funded system.

Members also flagged the need for ongoing engagement with political leadership, longer-term funding, effective oversight of procurement and numbers based on better data, and the need to consider pressures caused by the wider asylum, resettlement, housing and social cohesion context.

The LGA continues to engage with government on all these issues on your behalf. You can find out more at www.local.gov.uk/ukraine, and please raise any issues or views with your LGA principal adviser (www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers).

Reflect and reset

The LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition is an opportunity to focus on the issues that matter most to local communities

Following a two-year absence, the LGA will be hosting its annual conference and exhibition in person – at the Harrogate Convention Centre, from 28 to 30 June.

As usual, we will be discussing the latest issues affecting local government with a host of top political speakers – including Michael Gove, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary; Lisa Nandy, Shadow Levelling Up, Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary; Sir Ed Davey, Liberal Democrat Leader; and Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey.

Other expert speakers include Lord Victor Adebawale CBE, Chairman of NHS Confederation; Polly Billington, Chief Executive of UK100; Kriss Akabusi MBE, Olympian, media personality and businessman; Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner; Professor Lord Kamlesh Patel OBE, Chairman of Yorkshire County Cricket Club; and

Jackie Weaver, Cheshire Association of Local Councils and Ambassador, Compassion in Politics.

We will be showcasing the incredible work of councils at our ever-popular Innovation Zone (see below), celebrating the LGA's 25th birthday, and providing plenty of networking opportunities, to meet up with old colleagues and friends from around the country.

We are laying on more workshops and parallel plenaries than in previous years, so delegates have a wider choice of subjects to engage with – from supporting Ukrainian families, cost of living pressures, maximising levelling up opportunities, rebuilding pride in council housing, and delivering a low-

carbon economy, to adult social care reform and funding, corporate parenting, tackling violence against women and girls, and civility in public life.

The annual conference is also going paper-free, as part of the LGA's commitment to reducing our carbon emissions in response to the climate emergency – so we won't be printing conference programmes and other materials.

Instead, the programme and all the information you need can be found on the conference website (www.local.gov.uk/conference) and will shortly be available on our easy-to-use and interactive conference app.

Please follow us on social media at **#LGAConf22** to keep up with the latest news and conference updates, and we will look forward to seeing you in Harrogate in June!

i **To find out more** about the LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition and to book your place, please visit www.local.gov.uk/conference. **Member councils can take advantage of discounted rates**

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LGA Chairman
Cllr James Jamieson



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Innovation Zone 2022

Set within the wider LGA conference, the 2022 Innovation Zone is a lively and interactive space where delegates have an opportunity to hear presentations from individuals and organisations with innovative ideas.

The Innovation Zone will offer a range of presentations in line with our theme of 'Resilience and renewal', which recognises the significant challenges councils have managed in recent years while casting an eye to the future to look at how councils can and have continued to improve services and deliver positive outcomes for their communities.

More than 30 sessions will span themes including adult and children's services, community wellbeing and health, economic renewal and growth, digital and equalities,

diversity and inclusion. There will even be live drones and robots!

We will also be holding an exciting new series of 'Spotlight on...' sessions, offering talks that focus on big topics – such as climate change – and that aim to inspire and challenge audience members to engage with big ideas.

All presentations will offer delegates a chance to engage, learn, and think about how they might do things differently, so that councils can deliver better outcomes for the communities they serve.

The Innovation Zone programme will be available on the LGA website and on the LGA conference app in due course, so please keep an eye out for further details at www.local.gov.uk/lga-annual-conference-2022-innovation-zone



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

Smokefree by 2030

Councils are key to a comprehensive approach to reducing smoking rates

Analysis by epidemiologist Professor Sir Richard Peto has found that smoking has killed nearly eight million people in the UK in the past 50 years, with an estimated two million more expected to die in the next 20 years unless current smoking rates decline.

In my own council area, Somerset, we still lose about 850 people a year to smoking.

In February, Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, announced an independent review into tobacco control policies needed to achieve the Government's target of making England smoke free by 2030.

The 'smokefree' target will be said to have been reached when the proportion of adults smoking falls to 5 per cent or less.

The review is led by Javed Khan OBE, the former Chief Executive Officer of children's charity Barnardo's, who is tasked with providing "independent, evidence-based advice that will inform the Government's approach to tackling the stark health disparities associated with tobacco use".

As **first** was going to press, his report was expected to be published shortly.

We welcome the Government's ambitious target for England to be 'smokefree' by 2030.

Although the UK is a world leader in tobacco control and smoking rates have been falling for decades – in the mid-1970s nearly half of people smoked – the current rate of decline in smoking is insufficient to deliver the ambition. This is particularly so when you consider

"The LGA welcomes the Government's ambitious target"

that death rates are two to three times higher among disadvantaged social groups, and that manual workers are four times more likely to smoke than those in professional or managerial occupations.

Despite a continued decline in smoking prevalence, 13.9 per cent of adults in England still smoke. This equated to more than six million people in 2019.

Proactive work and support for routine and manual workers, pregnant women, those with long-term health and mental health conditions, and those in more deprived areas continue to be a priority for local government.

Across the country, councils commission integrated lifestyle services that can support all smokers.

These include face-to-face support, specialist support for pregnant women, nicotine replacement therapy, support from local pharmacies and, in some places, digital apps including a specialist text helpline for young people.

Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health. The evidence shows us that the best way to do this is by using a local stop smoking service, where you are four times more likely to succeed.

I very much hope to see this trend continue over the next few years and that we can truly make 2030 'smokefree'.



Key LGA asks of the smoking review:

- adequate funding to meet the 2030 'smokefree' ambition
- support a 'polluter pays' smokefree 2030 fund
- improved data sharing between agencies
- consideration of a tobacco licensing scheme
- improved coordination between the NHS and local government
- 'incentivised' enforcement for illicit tobacco work
- tackling the supply of illegal tobacco with tough enforcement.

Unlocking talent to level up

The LGA has published a new report setting out its practical vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service



Councillor **Kevin Bentley** is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board and Mayor **Marvin Rees** is Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board



beneath headline national figures, every area has a unique labour market – based on employment growth, qualification levels, unemployment, inactivity, vacancy rates. So, despite best intentions,

The Government is right to put skills, retraining and job creation front and centre of its levelling up agenda, recognising that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not.

Investment and interventions to achieve this must connect up at a local level, and for all places, if they are to support people of all ages – learners, unemployed people, career changers, as well as businesses and other employers of all sizes – to progress.

A joined-up and locally responsive employment and skills offer is critical to this.

This is not happening for all areas; we believe it should. That's why the LGA is delighted to present 'Work Local: unlocking talent to level up', which builds on the Government's levelling up White Paper.

In it, we make clear recommendations to Whitehall on ways it can improve its approach to employment and skills for all places right now, and what is needed for a coherent framework for employment and skills devolution.

We set out new research that,

a one-size or even a five-sizes fits all national approach to employment and skills provision will fall short of our shared aims to ensure greater equality of opportunity.

We discuss the complicated system by which government invests around £20 billion on 49 national employment and skills-related schemes or services across England, managed by multiple Whitehall departments and agencies, and delivered over different boundaries by various providers.

While well-intended, they are disconnected from one another and too short-term. No single organisation coordinates the system nationally or locally, making it hard to join up and target provision. Local government can help make this investment greater than the sum of its parts.

We provide evidence of local

government's leadership, knowledge and innovation in bringing together partners and national schemes to improve outcomes for residents, businesses and other employers.

This was vital through the pandemic, but equally important now as we move to recovery and beyond. With the right powers and resources, we can do more.

Our analysis shows that a Work Local approach, enabling local government to coordinate partners and bring together employment and skills provision across a place, could each year result in a 15 per cent increase in the number of people improving their skills or finding work. This would deliver benefits to residents, businesses, and the health and wellbeing of local communities, while reducing costs to the public purse.

We also set out what areas interested in a devolution deal could be asking from government on employment and skills, and how to deepen government's devolution framework.

To make all this happen, we urge the Government to work in partnership with us to:

- get the basics right everywhere, so all places can join up the offer more effectively
- empower local leaders and agree a framework for employment and skills devolution
- implement Work Local and roll out more place partnerships sooner than 2030.

Our prospectus for change sets out how this can be done. We have a huge opportunity to get this right in the coming months and look forward to working with government and stakeholders to make it happen.



Work Local is the LGA's positive and practical vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service. See www.local.gov.uk/work-local to find out more and to read '**Work Local: unlocking talent to level up**' in full

The LGA is delighted to announce its updated sector support offer to councils

Supporting the sector



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

Councils, as pillars of their local communities, have a critical role to play in delivering the best for residents, whether that is supporting the most vulnerable people, tackling climate change or driving economic growth.

The LGA's sector support offer is here to make sure councils have the support they need to fulfil that role, to improve, and to respond to a wide range of challenges and opportunities.

Shaped through direct engagement with councils and funded by government, this year's updated sector support offer will enable councils to continue providing critical services to communities, while helping to drive change and improvement across all regions.

It includes a wide range of tools and resources that all councils can access, both virtually and face to face, to drive improvements and respond to live issues.

This year's programme remains guided by what councils say they need.

For example, our leadership programme identifies and shapes new and existing talent among councillors and officers, and supports councils

to represent, and deliver for, the communities they serve.

Our expanded governance and finance offers help councils to enhance performance, systems and capacity, including through financial resilience and data-informed decision-making.

We also provide councils with comprehensive support to empower them to deliver their place-based visions for local priorities, such as climate change, housing, devolution, building safety and community engagement.

Additionally, our workforce and demand programmes enable councils to build capability and capacity to help manage demand pressures.

Our offer doesn't stop there. We provide further improvement support through our children's services programme and Care and Health Improvement Programme, alongside other improvement programmes, including cyber security, digital and technology, One Public Estate, and our Planning Advisory Service.

The LGA is also committed to giving councils support to respond to times of change, and is delivering member development opportunities, including councillor induction events and other forms of post-local elections support, following the 5 May elections.

Our changes in political leadership hub (see www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/changes-political-leadership) provides more details on the support and resources available.

The high levels of take-up and

positive feedback from recipients of support have underlined the value of the LGA's offer and the various ways in which sector support continues to help councils deliver on their priorities.

An independent review found that the vast majority of councils believe that sector-led improvement is the right approach, with 'remarkably high' levels of satisfaction with the sector support programme.

For example, our peer support offer – in particular, corporate peer challenges – provides a valuable opportunity for councils to review their position and look ahead to the future. Feedback from councils around this support continues to be highly positive.

As one council reflected: "We were really delighted with the effectiveness of the corporate peer challenge.

"The experience and expertise that the peers brought into our council were amazing, and the opportunity to work with them has been enormously valuable.

"The benefit of having an outside view on our council across a wide area has been very thought-provoking, and the ongoing engagement with the LGA has also been great."



See www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer for more on the LGA's improvement support offer for councils, including a summary of the 2022/23 sector support offer. For further information about any aspect of the offer, please contact your LGA principal adviser (www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers)

Snapshot of **sector support**

The LGA's sector support offer covers a huge range of areas, spanning leadership, governance, finance, workforce, place-based vision and demand. Here are just a handful of ways it can help your council

Peer challenge

Our highly valued peer challenge and remote peer support programme provides wide-ranging and flexible support to councils to improve, tackle live issues, and promote effective governance.

Peer challenges bring together political and managerial leadership from across the sector, using teams of senior member and officer peers who give up their time to help support and challenge councils other than their own.

Corporate peer challenges and finance peer challenges help councils improve across areas such as local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership, governance and culture, financial planning and management, and capacity for improvement.

We also provide service-specific peer challenges – for example, in communications, equalities, housing and planning, and fire and rescue.

Devolution and levelling up

Following publication of the levelling up White Paper, we provide councils with the tools and support to understand and respond to the new devolution framework and governance implications.

This includes: bespoke support to councils; peer support and peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing opportunities for councils on similar devolution pathways; and webinars and events to support and inform councils considering, or negotiating, a devolution deal.

We also offer sector-wide devolution and levelling up resources through our devolution hub (www.local.gov.uk/devolution-hub), levelling up hub (www.local.gov.uk/levelling) and devolution e-bulletin.

There are combined authority officer networks, as well as support to combined authorities to carry out improvement self-assessments, and help for councils to develop and communicate an evidence base for devolution deals and to understand data available to them.

Financial resilience

Effective financial leadership and sustainable financial management, underpinned by timely and comprehensive audit and scrutiny, are integral to councils' success and overall resilience.

Our expanded financial resilience programme offers councils bespoke and targeted support, provided through financial improvement and sustainability advisers and regional support teams, who often work collaboratively with other expert professionals and member peers. This offer also provides support and training to finance and audit chairs, and includes dedicated help for councils facing significant financial challenges, finance peer reviews, and financial governance training.

Political leadership

We offer comprehensive support to all councillors, whether they are new in post or looking for an opportunity to develop critical leadership skills, to help deliver more effective outcomes for communities and progress their careers.

This includes political leadership training, a new and comprehensive induction package for new councillors, and leadership development networking events, including for underrepresented groups such as BAME, LGBTQ+, women, and young councillors.

Post-elections support

Support is available to all councils following local elections, with targeted support for those that experience a change of control or leadership. Regional support teams and our expert network of peers help to smooth political transitions and ensure councillors and council officers can deliver effectively in their roles.

Climate change

Councils nationwide are taking urgent actions in their local areas, with partners and their local communities, to combat climate change and deliver net-zero carbon by 2050.

Our Climate Change Sector Support programme helps councils and residents to reach their local carbon-reduction and adaptation targets, and includes our greenhouse gas accounting tool, net-zero innovation programme, and our climate change hub (see www.local.gov.uk/climate-change).

Place-based vision

We provide councils with a range of support to deliver on their place-shaping ambitions, including devolution and priorities such as housing, climate change and local transformation. We give councils the additional tools and support to communicate effectively with the communities they serve, and enhance local pride in place.

Our Behavioural Insights programme pilots techniques to respond to local challenges and supports councils to manage demand locally by encouraging residents to take up preventative services and contribute to wider outcomes.



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

Pathways to work

Councils are supporting disadvantaged young people into education, employment and training

Councils hold many roles when it comes to young people. One of the key ones is their statutory duty to ensure young people are engaged in education, employment or training up to age 18, and up to age 25 where they

have an education, health and care plan.

An important part of this statutory duty includes re-engaging those who have left – or are on the verge of leaving – education and training, and developing a local strategy that provides young people with sufficient choice and opportunities.

Bristol **WORKS**

Bristol has a relatively young age profile compared with the average across England and Wales. Many of these young people are more likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) and significantly fewer than the national average are likely to go on to higher education.

To address these levels of disengagement, leading post-16 providers have developed the 'Improving Bristol Post 16: education, skills and careers pathways strategy 2019-2024', a collaborative strategy for building a post-16 system appropriate for the 21st century (see bit.ly/3FPLVPr).

A key part of post-16 delivery includes the Bristol WORKS programme, providing access to quality work experience and apprenticeships to every young person in the city.

A series of activities has developed under the WORKS umbrella programme specifically targeting disadvantaged and

marginalised audiences. These include:

- **Career Coach** – a bespoke five-year coaching programme that matches children (aged 13 or 14) in care with local employer mentors.
- **Bristol WORKS for Everyone** – tailored provision for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that starts from year 9, with careers exploration, and moves beyond year 11 with progression planning and supported mentoring into paid employment.
- **Realising Talent** – provides additional support to 14 to 16-year-olds with SEND to improve their opportunities at, and transitions to, post-16 education and training.

Successes and lessons learned include:

- **Building a recognised, trusted brand** – key to reaching young people experiencing disadvantage has been a well-established core, central offer in the WORKS programme.
- **Bespoke experience** – teams work closely

together to deliver a creative, tailored package for their schools, focusing on their biggest gaps and cohorts most at risk of becoming NEET.

- **Listening to schools and employers** – the team regularly collects feedback from schools, employers and young people involved in the programme.

In 2020-21, the programme delivered 2,850 experiences of work to young people, and this included supporting young people with additional (SEND) needs, including 60 learners supported through 'Realising Talent'.

Will, aged 14, one of the participants on the Bristol WORKS programme, said: "Overall, this week has taught me to believe in myself and never cave in and give up when times get tough."

Kirah, aged 15, said: "This project brought out many skills from me and my peers who I was working with. I felt more confident, and we all worked as a team to come together with a finished product."



Hackney Council Apprenticeships

Hackney is an ethnically diverse London borough that has experienced significant population growth and rapid economic change, including growth in local businesses, over the past 20 years.

While employment rates have improved, the borough has high levels of poverty and deprivation.

Fast economic and inclusive growth are core priorities for the council. An inclusive approach is integral to employment pathways delivery and support within Hackney Council.

The design of programmes and opportunities is focused on engaging and supporting young people experiencing disadvantage in the area, including care leavers, young people with disabilities, and young black males.

Hackney Council Apprenticeships has been operating for five years, with more than 100 apprenticeships delivered. The programme runs on a cohort model, so that there are now a couple of new recruitments per year.

Key features that enable a focus on disadvantaged groups include:

- engagement to stimulate demand: “We had more than 1,000 applications for 50 apprenticeships initially”
- recruitment – everyone is invited to an open day and the Employment Pathways team proactively engages in the recruitment process
- on-programme support –

includes pastoral and networking support for those on the apprenticeship programme.

Data shows that representation among disadvantaged groups and retention rates for apprenticeships at the council are high.

The inclusiveness strategy has also supported the council on a trajectory towards employing more people who live locally.

And Hackney Apprenticeship Network delivers, on average, much higher wages compared with Hackney employers overall.

This has also proved a challenge, though: in committing to paying high wages, you attract large numbers of good-quality candidates. But offering sufficient level 2 positions can ensure a focus on recruiting disadvantaged young people.

Senior level and cross-council commitment have been key to the success of the programme. There is sponsorship from senior leaders within the council and the local hospital involved in the apprenticeships.

One of the participants, a junior management consultant, outlined how they were “given a chance to talk to some of the recruitment team and they gave top tips on what to do and what not to do”, which was helpful.

“This challenge [has been] a learning curve for me to develop my skills and make sure that I can get the best out of my apprenticeship.”

To this end, councils are constantly working hard to develop bespoke initiatives for particular groups with specific needs identified within their respective local areas.

Often, many of these interventions are additional to standard national initiatives and are typically financed through council funding or through a range of external funding bids.

An LGA-commissioned compendium of case studies showcases the innovative work councils are undertaking to support and develop pathways for groups of young people experiencing disadvantage.

The case studies demonstrate good practice, with a focus on initiatives to support particular groups of young people, including those with special educational needs, young offender backgrounds, those of black, Asian and ethnic minority heritage, and with experience of the care system.

The case studies featured here, from Bristol, Hackney and Hampshire, demonstrate the range of programmes for this group of young people in their respective areas. The full nine case studies available online (see www.local.gov.uk/young-people-experiencing-disadvantage) demonstrate some key →



See www.local.gov.uk/young-people-experiencing-disadvantage for more on disadvantaged young people and all nine council case studies

→ findings, including:

- **Enhanced support for all:** many councils provide additional support to all targeted groups, as well as enhanced access to support and specific support for disadvantaged sub-groups – for example, those requiring ‘soft’ skills, such as social skills, team building, and increased confidence.
- **Care experienced young people:** some councils have specific programmes to provide additional tailored support to care experienced young people, including ring-fenced work experience and apprenticeship opportunities with the council as an employer.
- **Young people with disabilities:** some councils provide tailored support to young people who may be facing barriers to opportunities or who are not given opportunities by employers. This covers a range of physical and mental health impairments.

Young people face many challenges when it comes to staying in education, employment and training.

These include: transport and access opportunities, especially in rural areas; digital connectivity; anxiety issues; negative prior experience of education; lack of entry or level 1 learning opportunities; September entry (lack of roll-on-roll-off provision); financial concerns



“Young people face challenges to staying in education, employment and training”

about the implications of further study; and inconsistent careers education information, advice and guidance.

Funding provision is one of the main challenges for councils.

Activities are funded from a variety of sources, including local

authority budgets, combined authority funding, the European Social Fund, Opportunity Areas (Department for Education), and the Youth Futures Foundation.

In cases where council funding is used, it is often ‘under annual review’, which limits long-term certainty.

Evidence produced during the delivery of these case studies supports the argument for devolving further responsibility to local authorities, so that councils can provide effective support and pathways for these young people.

Hampshire Virtual College

Hampshire County Council is the third largest shire council in the country.

While the rates of NEETs and ‘not knowns’ among the 16 to 17-year-old population are relatively low (and on a par with national averages), the proportion of care leavers that are NEET tends to be much higher than the overall Hampshire cohort, at around 18 per cent.

Inclusion is at the heart of the council’s strategies and planning, with recognition of the need to bolster support for those young people experiencing disadvantage.

Hampshire Futures is the council’s delivery arm. It has two main programmes of activity that support young people into education, employment and training pathways – careers and participation, and employment and skills.

Introduced in 2018, Hampshire Virtual

College (HVC) aims to ensure that looked-after young people have access to high-quality, post-16 education, employment and training.

Specialist post-16 advisers deliver advice, guidance and face-to-face support for young people as they transition from year 11 onwards, raising their aspirations and attainment.

A dedicated team of five virtual college advisers (VCAs) provide intense, wrap-around support for progression into sustained education and/or employment for young people in care and care leavers from years 10 to 13.

The HVC post-16 programme is having a tangible impact, supporting young people to participate, achieve and progress in formal education and training.

Since its introduction, intended destinations for looked-after year 11 pupils are identified earlier and the participation rate in post-16 education and training for looked-after young people has increased.

The proportion of looked-after children securing a place in post-16 education is higher (97.9 per cent) than the overall cohort (97 per cent), and both are significantly above national and regional averages.

Attendance, completion and qualification achievement rates for college courses increased by around 3 per cent for the looked-after cohort of young people between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Among the successes and lessons learned are that:

- a key success factor for HVC has been the dedicated resource available to support this group of looked-after young people
 - the links between HVC and other initiatives supporting young peoples’ pathways have been important for successful outcomes.
- Participants report “never having had this level of intense support, either before or since”, and benefiting greatly from the initial support provided, “which helped me improve my confidence and motivation”.



Dr Daniela Paddeu is Senior Research Fellow (freight specialist) at the Centre for Transport and Society at the University of the West of England, Bristol

Last-mile freight

What can councils do to make doorstep deliveries more sustainable?

Transport planning and policy have usually prioritised measures and interventions to target the mobility of people rather than goods.

However, freight transport accounts for one-third of the overall carbon emissions from transport, with road freight playing a major role.

This is partially acknowledged in the UK transport decarbonisation plan, which encourages the implementation of specific interventions to address carbon emissions from freight transport, including cleaner fuels and propulsion (for example, hydrogen and electrification) for lorries used for long-distance road freight, and operational solutions for local deliveries.

Our research project, commissioned by the LGA, was designed to explore the extent to which councils were concerned about 'the last mile' – the final leg in the delivery of parcels. The councils we spoke to identified a wide range of challenges related to parcel delivery, in particular because of the increase in the number of diesel vans and cars and the related increased congestion and pollution on local roads.

The UK is the third-largest market for online shopping and home deliveries in the world, with about three billion parcels sent each year across the country, so local concerns are unsurprising.

Participating councils considered a range of possible solutions including the design and implementation of compulsory consolidation centres, to be used in combination with e-cargo bikes.

This would have great potential for reducing van movements in targeted

areas, but work would be needed to ensure acceptance from stakeholders, especially from logistics operators and retailers, who would have no other choice than using the scheme if they want to process any delivery.

This kind of solution has also been suggested in the decarbonisation plan, but it does not account for challenges and enablers.

Several councils also liked the idea of extending the concept of road pricing to the mobility of goods, as well as people, and suggested a charge on delivery vehicles to access specific areas/roads or times of the day to reduce congestion.

On the other hand, a pricing scheme to encourage consumers to choose more sustainable delivery options for their purchases could also help reduce congestion and pollution in local areas.

Currently, most councils felt they did not have sufficient capacity or capabilities to understand what to do to address local freight issues and to align with national thinking.

This is a relatively new issue in their local transport agenda and, unsurprisingly, they sought a stronger steer from central government, as well as support, as they have very limited powers to design and deliver these solutions – some of which would require a change in regulations and funding.

Finally, the biggest barrier to the successful design and implementation of local freight solutions is likely to be a lack of data.

There is, in general, a lack of national and local data on freight movements and their related impact on carbon emissions. This is mainly because companies are not willing to share this kind of information, as it is considered commercially sensitive.

However, without this data, councils might lack the understanding of the local last-mile deliveries market, which might lead them to a wrong approach.

Future policy should consider enabling local authorities to collect this kind of data to inform local transport plans and the design of any local interventions.



See www.local.gov.uk/publications for the full report, **'The future of last-mile deliveries: understanding the local perspective'**



“The UK is the third-largest market for online shopping and home deliveries in the world”

Skills to think big



Councillor **Bev Craig** (Lab) is Leader of Manchester City Council and joined the NGDP in 2009

On 1 December 2021, I took over as Leader of Manchester City Council at the age of 36, from Sir Richard Leese, who had been Leader of the council for more than 25 years.

Twelve years earlier, when I started on the NGDP, I didn't imagine that, little more than a decade later, I would become the politician in charge of one of the country's largest local authorities and one of Europe's fastest-growing cities. I was the first in my family to finish school, never mind go to university!

After graduating from the University of Manchester with first-class honours in politics and modern history, I started my professional career on the NGDP, at Blackburn with Darwen Council.

I was looking for a good-quality graduate scheme that balanced managerial work experience with academic learning, so I chose the NGDP over other schemes.

Learning about the breadth of services, the importance of localism through varied work placements and studying at Warwick Business School opened my eyes to the difference that effective, place-orientated services can make to shaping an area and determining future outcomes for a place and its people.

I met great colleagues who have gone on to do fantastic things. Ultimately, I chose to become more politically involved, and decided early on that the chief executive route was not for me. Schemes such as the NGDP are, however, vital for an energetic, ambitious and innovative managerial workforce that will lead us in the years to come.

The insight, experience, and skills that the scheme gave me have aided my confidence to run a city of almost 600,000 people, and take Manchester's ambitions to the next level.

Recruiting local government's future leaders

The LGA's graduate development programme for councils is celebrating its 20th anniversary

This year marks 20 years of the LGA's National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) – the only graduate programme designed specifically for local government.

Over the past two decades, the NGDP has helped hundreds of councils to recruit top-calibre local graduates to support the delivery of vital services for their communities and help in making a positive change locally.

Each year, the NGDP has grown.

This year alone, it has attracted applications from more than 4,000 graduates from every region of the country, giving councils access to a pool of candidates who are driven, passionate and committed to improving public services.

The programme has also seen an increase in the number of councils signing up, with more than 70 councils committed to the NGDP so far this year.

The NGDP continues to grow, continues to improve for councils and

"I cannot endorse the programme strongly enough, and I look forward to continuing to see how its participants go on to create and lead a new and brighter local government future"

– Althea Loderick, Chief Executive, Newham Council

“The programme has offered an opportunity for graduates to fast-track their career within local government, and offered us an opportunity to re-engage, fill gaps in key parts of the organisation, and recruit talented graduates, including from the local area”

– Sheffield City Council

graduates, and continues to deliver for the sector, as demonstrated by the supportive comments from councils on these pages.

However, it is not only a programme to support councils; the NGDP is also there for developing and supporting graduates to achieve their dreams and ambitions.

It is vital in helping talented alumni connect with each other. This has been recognised, with the NGDP consistently ranked in the Times Top 100 Graduate Employers list and, last year, shortlisted for the Institute of Student Employers’ ‘Best overall graduate scheme’.

Through the NGDP, graduates have harnessed their skills and gone on to achieve real success in local government and beyond, as demonstrated by former participants Chris Sinnott and Cllr

Bev Craig (see panels, left and right).

Looking to the future, the NGDP will continue to be ambitious for the local government sector. It wants to ensure it continues to attract and develop the best talent from across the country to support councils in delivering for their communities.



If your council is interested in signing up to the 2023 programme, or wants to find out more about the NGDP, please visit www.local.gov.uk/ngdp or email ngdp@local.gov.uk

Tailored to help graduates and the sector thrive



Chris Sinnott is Deputy Chief Executive of Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, and joined the NGDP in 2005

It's rare that any length of time passes without me drawing on my time on the NGDP to decide how best to approach my work.

The programme gave me a really strong foundation in so much that I now draw on as a senior manager: skills in managing difficult conversations; working with politicians to deliver their priorities; or, rapidly analysing and understanding issues.

I have just been offered the opportunity to become my councils' chief executive from the beginning of next year.

My time on the NGDP gave me the start to my career that means I've been able to achieve that exciting step. I would, and regularly do, recommend it for anyone thinking about a career in public services.

The benefits of the NGDP are clear. The placements mean that graduates have a working knowledge across services, and relationships across organisations, breaking down silos and developing officers with a rounded knowledge of how public services work.

Alongside that, the programme develops knowledge and the softer skills of graduates, while also creating a support network of other graduates and alumni across the country. That sharing of best practice, ideas and experience not only helps the graduates – it also helps us as a sector to improve and thrive.

In an increasingly competitive market for attracting talented individuals, the NGDP provides the ideal package – a national scheme that is tailored to local needs, attracting graduates to local government across the country.

“The NGDP recruitment process is really helpful for councils... you can be confident that, at the final interview stage, you're speaking with some really great individuals”

– Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

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.

Made from starches, cellulose and vegetable oils, the wrapping can be disposed of in your compost heap: at least 90 per cent will compost within 12 months. It can be used as a food waste caddy liner where accepted by local authorities. Do not place in plastic recycling nor in garden waste collection bins. While compostable, it is not compatible with large-scale rapid composting operations.

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**



Meanwhile, did you know that we publish all the stories from first magazine online each month, at **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**

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** to let us know.



Maddy Desforges
is Chief Executive
Officer of the National
Association for Voluntary
and Community Action

Councils' role in the future of volunteering



Volunteering, and a strong voluntary sector, lie at the heart of thriving communities – empowering and connecting individuals, and benefiting and strengthening both the individual volunteer and the wider community.

We already have a strong culture of volunteering in this country, and the pandemic has sparked renewed interest in the power of volunteering, which cannot be taken for granted.

We're proud to be a partner in the new 'Vision for Volunteering', which is a bold vision setting out the ways we see volunteering developing over the next decade.

Councils have a key role to play in this, across the vision's five key themes – awareness and appreciation; power; equity and inclusion; collaboration; and experimentation – and we have four key 'takeaways' for local government.

First, close, trusted relationships should be nurtured. The Vision for Volunteering envisages a shift away from 'imposed' partnership working towards community-led coalitions of interest.

Through the pandemic, councils worked collaboratively, in many formal and informal ways, with voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups and the local VCS infrastructure organisations that make up our membership.

This collaboration enhanced the role of individual volunteers and the communities

"The vision envisages a shift towards coalitions of interest"

with which they work. This approach should be developed and grown further.

Second, is that power is devolved to the most appropriate level. Our vision is for councils and organisations to support and champion communities to develop and drive their own collaborative activity, based on intelligence about what is needed in that community. This requires a clear understanding of the resources that communities already have, how those can best be used, and clarity on roles, responsibilities, and the outcome sought.

Ensuring that decisions about priorities and actions are made by those best placed to make them will create the conditions for effective volunteering.

Third, infrastructure bodies can support councils to best utilise volunteers. Developing more awareness and appreciation of the role of volunteers is central to the Vision for Volunteering.

We consistently see communities responding rapidly and creatively to

challenges presented locally – something that was particularly evident during the pandemic.

We must collectively learn from effective partnership working in times of crisis and we stand ready to help councils unleash the potential of volunteering.

Finally, investment is essential. Relationship-building, empowering local communities and supporting volunteering – none of these come without investment.

We know that there is pressure on councils, which confronted an estimated £9.7 billion in cost pressures and income losses in 2020/21, on top of more than a decade of deep funding cuts.

At the same time, VCS organisations experienced increased demand for services combined with falling incomes.

Failing to invest in the local community and volunteering weakens communities, while investment enables the five priorities of our vision.

The Vision for Volunteering calls on us all to embrace a genuine learning culture, seeking out and listening to those with expertise (wherever this lies), building on what works well, and learning when things go wrong.

We look forward to working with local government as we further develop the vision. Reach out to your local VCS for a conversation about how you can work together to bring it to life where you are.



Find out more at
visionforvolunteering.org.uk and
navca.org.uk

Hitting them where it hurts – at the ballot box



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

The Liberal Democrats are back, and we are back with a bang.

This year's elections saw success after success, with 224 gains across the UK – 194 in England, 10 in Wales and 20 in Scotland.

I had the great pleasure of spending election day in Salford, Greater Manchester, helping my friend Chris Twells win a seat and the group return to the city council after an absence of more than a decade.

The elections saw Liberal Democrats gain seats against Labour in places such as Croydon, after an absence of 20 years, and in Lambeth, where we are now the official opposition. More seats fell to us in Sunderland and Birmingham.

We saw a stunning win in Hull to take control, and we won every council seat in former party leader Tim Farron's parliamentary constituency in Cumbria, to take control of the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

Woking fell to us, and it was an especial delight to see Gosport go Liberal Democrat – even better, they will be rejoining the LGA.

Peter Taylor was returned as Mayor of Watford, romping home with 54 per cent of first-preference votes.

And while I am no fan of our first-past-the-post voting system, I couldn't help smiling at the massive Liberal Democrat majorities in Richmond, Kingston, South Cambridgeshire and St Albans, where the Tories were nearly wiped out.

Colchester saw its Tory leader ousted, resulting in a Liberal Democrat-led, cross-party administration, along with West Oxfordshire and Huntingdonshire. And Tunbridge Wells, a classic 'blue wall' seat, will

now have a Liberal Democrat-led council.

The icing on the cake for me was seeing my Somerset neighbours storm home to take control of the new unitary council, building on the great work that the Liberal Democrat-led districts have been doing.

Well done team! Communities Secretary Michael Gove and the Tories might be regretting their push for local government reorganisation now.

Commiserations to those who didn't get re-elected or just missed out: we are on our way back, your chance will soon come again.

"The icing on the cake was seeing my Somerset neighbours storm home to take control of the new unitary council"



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

Planning for the future

The planning system has been a huge frustration for many councils over many years, and yet housing remains unaffordable in many parts of the country.

While there have been several attempts to improve planning in recent years, in general these have seemed to make the situation worse rather than better.

The LGA has campaigned vigorously that building the right, quality homes – in the right places, with the appropriate infrastructure – requires a local, plan-led system, and that funding needs to be provided for infrastructure.

Now, with the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill announced in the Queen's Speech, while we need to work through the detail, government has listened to several of our asks.

The Bill's proposals seek to simplify and standardise the local plan process,

and limit speculative development applications. And a new infrastructure levy will be non-negotiable and set at a local level to capture more of land value uplift for infrastructure.

We want to work with government to ensure the levy is a success and delivers more affordable housing and infrastructure contributions at a local authority level than the existing systems for developer contributions.

Another encouraging proposal is to empower councils to bring vacant properties back into use.

Councils remain concerned about permitted development rights, which allow the conversion of offices, shops and restaurants into often poor-quality homes

without the need to provide any affordable homes or infrastructure funding. We will continue to campaign to remove these.

Meanwhile, supporting councils to build a new generation of high-quality council homes must be a national priority if levelling up ambitions are to be met.

This needs to include urgent reform of Right to Buy to allow councils to keep 100 per cent of receipts from sales of homes and to set discounts locally.

Throughout, it is vital that democratic input is retained as part of the local decision-making process to ensure that local people can continue to have a say and help shape the places where they live, now and for future generations.





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

The largest party in local government

I would like to congratulate all the Conservative candidates who were elected or re-elected in May's local elections and offer my commiserations to those who were unsuccessful.

I would also like to thank those who stood down from their councils for their service to their communities and the Conservative Party.

I know how hard colleagues across the country worked, and I am disappointed that in so many cases that effort was not rewarded.

"The increased cost of living is the number one issue for the public at the moment"

While the results overall were disappointing, there were some bright spots, including: gaining control of Harrow Council; winning the inaugural mayoral election in Croydon and the new North Yorkshire unitary; and making net gains in Amber Valley, Barnsley, Basildon, Bolton, Brent, Cannock Chase, Croydon, Enfield, Halton, Harlow, Hartlepool, Hounslow, Hyndburn, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Sandwell, Slough, Sutton, Tameside, Thurrock and Wirral.

Despite the losses that we suffered, we remain the largest party in local government and the largest group at the LGA, meaning that we will retain the LGA chairmanship for the next year – a remarkable achievement given that we have been in power nationally for 12 years.

These elections have shown that the increased cost of living – which is overwhelmingly due to international factors – is the number one issue for the public at the moment.

In the coming months, I know that Conservative councils and councillors, acting alongside our colleagues in government, will be doing all that we can to support our residents through these difficult and challenging times.



Councillor **Anntoinette Bramble** is Deputy Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

No help with cost-of-living crisis

Congratulations to all the councillors – of all parties – who were elected for the first time in May, and now have the chance to lead positive change in your local communities. Commiserations to all who lost their seats: I'm sure you will all find other ways to act as local champions.

And to Labour councillors in particular – well done, you can be proud to be part of some excellent gains across the nation.

Sadly, there wasn't as much for us to feel positive about in the Queen's Speech.

The Government claimed its priority is to help ease the cost of living crisis, yet there was no mention of measures that will help people deal with soaring prices.

Rather than offering support to families, the Government is refusing to implement a windfall tax on energy companies' unexpected profits that even energy bosses say they should be subject to.

Instead, ministers have told working people to 'find a better job'.

The Conservatives' levelling up agenda, while present, appears to have been hollowed out. The long-awaited Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill offers little substance to the promises of devolving power and money to councils and unleashing talent in 'left behind' communities.

"The Conservatives' levelling up agenda appears to have been hollowed out"

But even if it had been as radical as it has been trailed, levelling up will continue to be an empty government slogan until it deals with the inadequacy of government funding for local authorities.

Let's hope the Government sees sense and finds a way to fund local ambitions properly.



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

Flying the flag of democracy

Welcome to all new councillors, and well done to those who were re-elected!

All of our LGA Independent Group candidates have spoken up for residents on important local issues and influenced thinking in their areas for the better.

We saw 837 Independent councillors elected (511 Independent or Residents Association, 202 Plaid Cymru, and 124 Green Party).

"Independent candidates spoke up for residents on important local issues"

This brings the total number of councillors supported by the LGA Independent Group to more than the 3,000 mark – 3,064.

Independent, Green and councillors from smaller parties have gained councils, such as Castle Point in Essex; grown their numbers, such as in Tandridge in Surrey; and formed coalitions and alliances in places such as Conwy in Wales, Huntingdonshire in Cambridgeshire, and in West Oxfordshire.

At the LGA, the Independent Group has gained extra seats on the People and Places Board and the City Regions Board.

This year's successes are particularly significant. We had fewer candidates standing in this election cycle than we will have in the district elections next year, and there should be little doubt that this year's successes are a sign of things to come.

Thank you for flying the flag of democracy. Every communication, leaflet and doorstep conversation is laying the ground for the next election.

A reminder that support is available via the Independent Group Office or through contacting your regional peer. To join the conversation in the Independent Group, you can sign up to a policy think tank or one of our councillor networks via our website, www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent.

The national day for older people



The Lady Flight
is Founder of
Silver Sunday

Silver Sunday is a day dedicated to older people and takes place on 2 October.

Initially launched as a local campaign to tackle loneliness and isolation, Silver Sunday now takes place across the UK with hundreds of fun and free activities at which older people can make new friends, try new activities and connect with other generations in their local communities.

Simply put, it is a day for older people to enjoy themselves – and given the past two years, I believe this is more important now than ever.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Silver Sunday. Over the years, we have been hugely grateful to have received

so much support and enthusiasm from so many local authorities.

Last year, saw our first ever Silver Sunday Dog Show in Paddington; a programme of more than 100 events for 'Silver Salisbury'; young volunteers supporting the annual 'Great Elderly Tea Party' in Lancashire; creative classes at Hampton Court Palace; and scouts from Kings Lynn, Norfolk, delivering handmade gifts to local care homes.

Our ambition for 2022 is for over 2,000 Silver Sunday events across the country, and I am asking for your help in achieving this.

The most important way a council can take part is by urging local businesses, charities, community groups and volunteers to get behind Silver Sunday and organise, or

host, events on or around 2 October.

Alternatively, you could host one yourselves! As Cllr Mimi Harker OBE (Con, Buckinghamshire) says: "The smiles and happy faces inspire me to host the event."

"The smiles and happy faces inspire me to host the event"

"I would encourage everyone to think about hosting a Silver Sunday event in their town, parish, club, or organisation. It is such a worthwhile thing to do, and leaves you walking on air for the rest of the year while you plan the next one!"

We would be thrilled if you felt able to take part, and it would be great to see you on our national map of events.

i Download our free info pack and event toolkit from silversunday.org.uk, follow us on Twitter @SilverSundayUK or email us at info@silversunday.org.uk

Video hearings extend access to justice



Nicky Reynolds is
Deputy Director
Future Hearings
Service at HM Courts
and Tribunals Service

Using video, people can now attend a court or tribunal hearing without travelling to a court building.

This also applies to council staff who attend hearings as part of the services they provide locally – from planners attending the Property Tribunal in respect of compulsory land purchases, to children's services teams involved with family courts.

Video hearings played a big part in keeping justice moving throughout the pandemic, and it is now common for all or some participants to not attend their hearing in person if it is appropriate.

From mid-May to December 2020, audio or video hearings accounted for just more than half of all hearings. Use of video, at the discretion of a judge, will continue to play a part in the justice system.

Attending a hearing remotely is safe, convenient and economical. It can reduce stress and, for some, remove the worry of

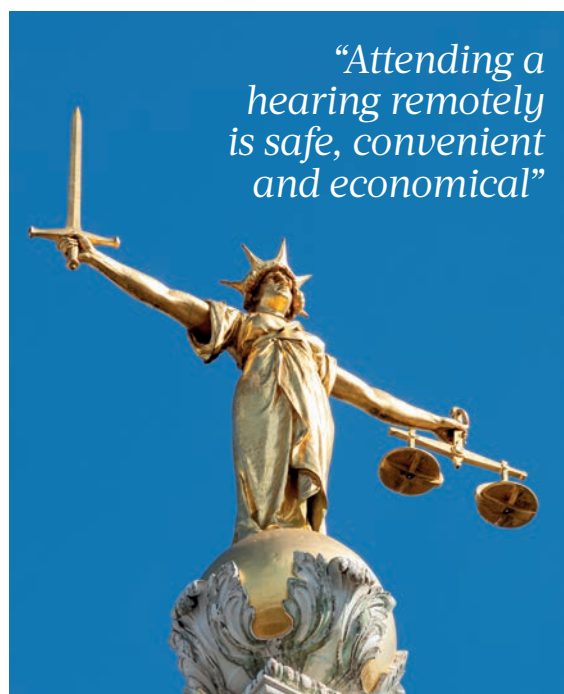
being in a room with people they are in conflict with. It reduces travel, benefiting participants and the environment.

For local authorities, attending a hearing from a local office may be more convenient, and allows staff time to be used more efficiently.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service is introducing a new service to support video hearings, and local authorities need to be ready. It is easy to use for staff, but your IT team will need to check their settings to avoid disruption to hearings or delays in important decisions being made – for example, in relation to issues such as:

- applications for the discharge of patients detained in psychiatric hospitals
- appeals against special educational needs decisions
- compensation for the compulsory purchase of land
- employment disputes.

Local authorities play an important part in court and tribunal hearings and need to be prepared. You can do this by alerting your IT team to the advice on gov.uk at bit.ly/3FyrGWj. There is also step-by-step guidance at bit.ly/3wBoTHR or contact us directly by emailing VHImplementationTeam@justice.gov.uk.



"Attending a hearing remotely is safe, convenient and economical"



Dr Jason Schaub is a Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Birmingham

Improving the social care experiences of LGBTQ+ youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) young people in social care have largely been overlooked in research, practice and policy.

They are more likely to be placed in out-of-home care settings, have longer durations in care, and are less satisfied with their care experiences than their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

New research led by the University of Birmingham seeks to improve the social care experiences of LGBTQ+ children and young people in England.

The LGBTQ+ Young People in Social Care (LYPSA) research project is a pair of linked studies funded by What Works for Children's Social Care, funded by the Department for Education.

LYPSA seeks to improve both our understanding of LGBTQ+ young people's social care experiences and the ways social care supports this vulnerable group.

Our research team conducted a scoping review of the international research literature. This showed that LGBTQ+ young people face more significant health and wellbeing challenges than their peers while in foster or residential care.

But social workers report lacking the necessary knowledge to meet their needs adequately, often because of not having received appropriate training.

LGBTQ+ young people experience more placement moves, longer

durations in care and heightened educational barriers.

Our review found that ethnic minority LGBTQ+ youth, lesbian/bisexual girls, and trans and non-binary youth face particular challenges, and social care systems appear especially ill-equipped to meet the needs of transgender and non-binary youth.

Our first study interviewed 20 LGBTQ+ young people about their experiences of residential social care in England. This was the first study of its kind in the UK, and was co-produced with care experienced LGBTQ+ young advisers.

"Social workers report lacking the necessary knowledge"

Interviews showed that LGBTQ+ youth face ongoing homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and policing of gender norms, where restrictive gender roles are enforced.

As a result, LGBTQ+ young people often hide their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of negative repercussions, and experience a profound sense of isolation and invisibility in care settings.

One young person commented: "I never came out as non-binary while I was in residential care. But there were quite a lot of issues around gender expression, because I was more comfortable wearing

masculine clothes... [but] my support worker was like, 'You're not wearing boys' clothes, you are not buying boys' clothes, you are not going to the boys' section at all'.

"So I ended up buying a couple of sets of boxers. She found out and went ballistic... 'You need to return these right now'."

The interviews also showed some positive residential care experiences, specifically for allowing young people the freedom to explore their identity in a safe and affirming space.

The project's second study will test an online LGBTQ+ knowledge training programme for children's social workers. The aim of this accredited e-learning module is to improve social workers' knowledge and skills in working with LGBTQ+ young people.

The project team is currently seeking children's social workers in England to take part. Managers, senior managers and supervising social workers of foster carers are also eligible, provided they are employed by a local authority.

The module is accredited for continuing professional development (CPD) and will be offered free to participants and their organisations. Participants will also receive a £10 voucher as an incentive to take part.



To learn more about LYPSA or participate in the study, please visit: bit.ly/3FutnUy

Local elections dilemma



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



With the final result in the London Borough of Havering declared fully 96 hours after the polls closed, this year's local elections truly were a slow burn.

On the night of 5 May and into the following Friday morning, Labour looked to be on course for its best local level performance for a decade.

But, as Friday morphed into Saturday, it became clear that it was the Liberal Democrats who were the major beneficiaries of Conservative decline, making several times more gains than Labour in England.

The Greens, too, fared well, easily doubling the number of seats they were defending.

With Labour picking up scarcely two dozen extra seats across England, the party made little headway in challenging the Conservatives for control of the LGA.

And if the Greens poll as effectively at next year's local elections – which are concentrated in the English shires – it is just possible that they will then qualify for separate recognition on the LGA's boards

and committees. That's something even UKIP failed to do at the height of its popularity back in 2013/14.

In London, Labour's primary target was to win additional councils rather than simply build on their record seat numbers from 2018.

The party did take the iconic inner city, low council tax boroughs of Wandsworth and Westminster, as well as Barnet, where accusations of anti-semitism had proved harmful four years ago.

But Labour was shocked to shed eight seats and control in Barnet's north London neighbour Harrow and, perhaps less surprisingly, to sacrifice its majority in financial scandal-hit Croydon too.

Politics in Tower Hamlets remains opaque perhaps even to its own residents. Here, the number of Labour seats halved as Lutfur Rahman's Aspire party grabbed control of the council as well as the mayoralty for Mr Rahman himself.

It was in south London, though, that another key aspect of the wider election played out as the Conservatives returned their lowest number of councillors ever in the capital.

They were almost wiped out in Richmond upon Thames and collapsed in the Wimbledon wards within Merton,

where it was the Liberal Democrats who stepped into the breach as they did in other suburban and rural parts of England.

Ed Davey's party had a stunning victory in the new, unitary Somerset County Council, and wait in the wings to take control of Westmorland and Furness when that new council goes 'live' in April 2023.

In both cases, these are areas where the party has a record of parliamentary success.

With the electoral shackles of involvement in the post-2010 Cameron coalition finally thrown off, the Liberal Democrats look again to have become a repository for discontented former Conservatives.

Councils controlled (England) 2022

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Ind/other	No overall control
126	78	26	6	95

Councillors (England) 2022

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Green	Ind/other
6,756	5,206	2,540	529	1,880

Councils controlled (Wales) 2022

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Plaid Cymru	Ind/Other	No overall control
0	8	0	4	1	9

Councillors (Wales) 2022

Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Plaid Cymru	Green	Ind/Other
111	528	69	202	8	316

**Results summary 2022
England** (compared to
pre-election including
councils without elections,
local by-elections,
defections and structural/
boundary changes)

	Seats	Councils
Conservative	-332	-12
Labour	+25	-2
Lib Dem	+178	+4
Green	+79	-
Other	+50	+1
No overall control	-	+9

**Results summary 2022
Wales** (compared to
pre-election including
structural/boundary
changes)

	Seats (+ gains; - losses)	Councils (+/-)
Conservative	-86	-1
Labour	+66	+1
Lib Dem	+10	-
Green	+7	-
Plaid Cymru	+9	+3
Other	-6	-2
No overall control	-	-1

but often fell short of recovering even to 2018 levels.

Indeed, it recorded a net loss of seats overall in the metropolitan boroughs, including in Barnsley, Oldham, South Tyneside and Wirral.

It did gain Kirklees (centred on Huddersfield) as well as the Lancashire former mill town of Rossendale, but lost to the Liberal Democrats in Hull for the first time in a decade.

Labour had more clear-cut success in Wales, where the Conservatives failed to defend their high water mark from 2017 – losing more than four in 10 of their seats.

the Welsh ‘red wall’ in the north east. In Denbighshire, for example, they filled the vacuum created by the collapse of the Conservatives in an area where they had made two gains from Labour at the 2019 General Election.

Plaid Cymru had a curious election, but it is likely the party will willingly trade its small decline in seat numbers for control of three additional councils including Anglesey and, by the narrowest of margins, Carmarthenshire.

With the exception of Tower Hamlets, the various mayoral contests followed a predictable pattern.

Four of the seven winning candidates were elected by a clear majority on the first ballot, including Liberal Democrat Peter Taylor in Watford. The party was successful there in one of the first mayoral direct elections in May 2002 and has not looked like losing since.

There was a much tighter battle in the inaugural election in Croydon, where the Conservative candidate, Jason Perry, narrowly prevailed over former Labour council leader Val Shawcross.

With a hung council and a potential debt crisis looming, he faces a torrid term of office.

And just as Croydon became the first place since 2015 to join the ranks of single local authority mayors, Bristol became the fourth council after Hartlepool, Stoke-on-Trent, and Torbay to vote to get rid of theirs.

The future looks to lie more with the combined authority model, with incumbents often having access to bigger dedicated budgets and greater strategic oversight.

“The areas forever dubbed the ‘red wall’ delivered a patchy message in the local elections”

In south Wales, Labour came close to winning a majority in both Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan for the first time since the Tony Blair-led party was an unstoppable force in 1995.

Labour also won back control in Blaenau Gwent and Bridgend after what seemed like the historical aberration of their loss five years ago.

But even in Wales, it could not escape cost free. Neath Port Talbot, consistently Labour in its various guises since 1973, saw a haemorrhaging of seats to Independents.

And it was Independents who frustrated the party in its fight back in

Gosport, West Oxfordshire and Woking, all relatively affluent and recently solidly Conservative at constituency level, trended in a similar way.

To be fair, though, Labour did make its own mark in some southern towns and cities.

Two gains in Southampton in wards it had not won since 2016 were key to flipping the council straight over from the Conservatives.

It also won Crawley and, remarkably for the first time, Worthing. A borough which had no Labour representation at all for nearly half a century until 2018 now boasts a party majority of nine in a 37-seat chamber.

These cases all underscore a significant dilemma for the two major parties.

The Conservatives are at risk of being caught in a pincer moment between Labour and the Liberal Democrats with each posing a threat in different parts of the country.

Labour, for its part, must marry its recovery in support among younger, highly educated urban voters with a renewal of its appeal in traditional heartland territory.

These areas of the midlands and north, now forever dubbed the ‘red wall’, delivered a patchy message in the local elections.

Labour clearly bounced back from the drubbing it received at the last General Election and the 2021 local elections,

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