

## Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Safer & Stronger Communities Board
<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 12 November 2019
<b>Venue:</b>	Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [\*\*Appendix A\*\*](#) to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
<b>47</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>	
	<p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and noted apologies received (which can be found at <a href="#"><b>Appendix A</b></a>).</p> <p>No declarations of interest were made.</p>	
<b>48</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	
	<p>Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner, introduced item two. Nicole's presentation focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The synergies between community safety and resilience, and her role.</li><li>• Her appointment took place six weeks ago at the time of writing this note, with the remit of improving the response to domestic abuse (DA) in England and Wales. Nicole commented that her role gives public leadership to the role and provides practical ways of moving in forward in terms of services and a coordinated response at a national level.</li><li>• Nicole discussed the Domestic Abuse Bill, which has now ceased due to the proroguing of Parliament and the upcoming General Election. Nicole stated that her role &amp; office will continue regardless, however, the Bill would have given her role additional powers which would have been helpful – for example, a duty for the Government to respond to enquiries. In addition to this, Nicole stated that whilst she cannot give any definite assurances, she believes it is likely that the Bill will come back in the new session of Parliament, given the cross-party support &amp; discussions she has had with leading parliamentarians.</li><li>• This role is brand new, and is similar to the Victims Commissioner, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and the Children's Commissioner. Her office is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding, to highlight the office of the Commissioner's function, as well as the overlapping of other Commissioner's remits.</li></ul>	

- Nicole stated that she has started to undertake the mapping of service provision, which is an essential part of her role. This mapping aims to highlight good practice, where practice is and practice & further improvements ought to be. The Commissioner has started to meet with analysts and exploring how best to undertake this large task. This mapping will also need to identify what good service provisions within local government looks like, as well as identifying key early intervention practices to reduce and eventually minimise crisis points. This will vary from area to area, as will the commissioning of services. However, the Commissioner wants to shine a light on areas where it is done well, and where there needs to be some improvement.
- The Commissioner also gave an overview of the mapping undertaken to date, by the HO, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) the Ministry of Justice and the third sector. Her office is trying to collate this information and make sense of it.
- The Commissioner also plans to map coordinated community responses; her office has stated talking to specialist DA services, as well as wider issues with mental health and criminal justice charities.
- The Commissioner discussed specialist DA courts, as well as producing a refreshed manual at the start of 2020 that looks at what works to tackle and prosecute DA within courts.
- Some parts of the Commissioner's role relate specifically to children and Black, Asian and Mixed Ethnicities (BAME) communities.

Following the Commissioner's presentation, members raised the following points:

- Members discussed the extensive cross over with children's safeguarding service, and the need for more statutory engagement with agencies.
- Members discussed the need for early intervention and prevention, and stated there will be a great opportunity through revised curriculum in schools and PSHE to educate young people around healthy relationships. Member supported the idea to build this into the national curriculum.
- Members discussed how lack of funding to local government is the key in every issue the sector is facing; members agreed that local authorities hold a statutory duty to provide accommodation and refuges at a huge cost, however, they always seem to find the funds to support this – through Public Health grants and so on. However, it was very disappointing to hear the quantum associated with the Bill would only be £15 million, which won't cover costs already being spent.
  - In response to these, the Commissioner stated that one of the few upsides of the stalling of the Bill process is more time to consider what a statutory duty should entail, alongside a reasoned costs to local authorities; the Commissioner stated that costing this properly is key if duty is to be broadened, and noted that local government and Cllr's are their best place to lead on this, given their expertise. The Commissioner also remarked that it is vital

to strike a good balance of refuge provisions, as well as preventative community-based services.

- Members discussed the PCC's work on DA, as well as Local Partnership Board's and how these differ in practice. It was discussed how sharing best practice on DA are essential so all local areas are at the same level to tackle this issue. Members also questioned what work the Commissioner's office will be doing on perpetrator intervention; where the Commissioner's recommendations will be going; and how will engagement with local authorities be mapped?
  - o In response to this, the Commissioner: agreed that sharing best practice amongst all government bodies – including all the way up to central Government – should be practiced; regarding perpetrator intervention, the Commissioner admitted that this work varies across local areas, and is not extensive across the country – normally perpetrators just enter into the criminal justice system; mapping is still in the very early stages of completion, and this will be looked at; and an Annual Report will be presented to Parliament & the Home Secretary (with the latter having limited powers to change the report, given the independence jurisdiction the Commissioner has in her role).
- Two issues raised by members including media reporting on DA cases, and the significant impact this has on victims, as well as the essential links between DA services and Housing Associations.
  - o In response to this, the Commissioner stated that Housing Associations providing support to victims, as well as signposting & actively working with DA support services is an excellent example of multi-agency working. The Commissioner also stated that she will be working with the Victims Commissioner, focusing on media reporting.
- Members brought up other issues that link with DA – including female genital mutilation & breast flattening, forced marriage, honour based violence, and abuse in the workplace. Will the Commissioner's office will support organisations working towards tackling this abuse? Members also requested further clarification on support organisations that would maintain single sex provisions for victims.
  - o In response to this, the Commissioner admitted that there had been some debate over the remit of her role. The Commissioner stated that many areas have a Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy in place, and so there have been discussions over to incorporate VAWG issues or not. However, the Home Secretary and Minister very were clear on the role being focused on DA, however acknowledged the obvious overlaps with other issues – and link into those as much as possible. The Commissioner is in contact with the Victims Commissioner, agreeing on where focuses will be or not.
  - o In relation to single sex provision services, the Commissioner commented that there had been lots of debate about whether Bill should be gendered. The

Commissioner also commented that she believes it should be emphasised in the statutory guidance over service provisions and interventions based on gender, and leave the Bill genderless, given it is a real variety of people who experience DA. The Commissioner also stated that DA victims are more often women, and that there will be a need to have single sex, women only services.

- Other issues put the Commissioner included the lack of youth service provisions, which will be an excellent place for young people to learn about DA at an early intervention point.
- Members also mentioned the work of the multi-agency safeguarding hubs.

The Commissioner thanked members for their time, and expressed that she hopes to create an active partnership with all councils, and the Board, in order to influence at a local level. The Commissioner concluded that local government were on the frontline to tackle DA and despite funding cuts, were providing brilliant services.

The Chair concluded the discussion by mentioning three lobbying asks:

1. Sex and relationship education, starting in primary schools, so children and young people know what healthy relationships look like.
2. Limit and regulate the availability of violent pornography, as this significantly impacts young people; the Chair stated that a generation of young men, having waited this, have now grown up thinking this behaviour is normal.
3. A need for nationwide access to accredited perpetrator programmes for local areas, rather than taking the criminal justice route (which will only ever deliver them a 12 month sentence). The Chair went on to state that by that point, perpetrators would have done significant damage to their victims.

### **Decisions**

1. Members noted the paper; and
2. Provided further feedback to the Commissioner.

## **49 Holocaust Memorial Day Trust**

Item three was introduced by Claudia Hyde, Local Government Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) Officer.

Claudia stated that Holocaust Memorial Day takes place each year on 27 January, building on the objective that prejudice and the language of hatred must be challenged by everyone, and to offer a day of remembrance to commemorate the six million Jews and others killed in following the atrocities in World War Two. According to HMD, 64 per cent of people in a recent survey did not know how many Jews were killed during the Holocaust, and there is a rising belief the Holocaust is a conspiracy theory. The day was first marked in UK in 2001. HMD 2020 will have particular significance as it marks both the 75th anniversary of

the liberation of Auschwitz and is the 25th anniversary of the Genocide in Bosnia.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust – a charity set up by Government to promote HMD and support other organisations to mark it - will be attending the meeting to provide an update on their work and explore how they can assist councils planning 2020 events. Claudia stated the trust encourages to learn lessons of the past to build a safer future free from genocide and discrimination.

Claudia notified members that the 2020 theme will be 'Stand Together' – standing against discrimination, which can lead to genocide. In 2019 the HMD had 10,500 activities in which 200 councils and 800 libraries took part. There was a range of activities catered to different audiences. The HMD believe the work ties in with broader local government work over challenging prejudice views – according to in-house surveys, people who take part in HMD activities were more likely to feel sympathetic to people from different backgrounds and took some form of action as a result of attending a HMD event.

Claudia concluded that this is crucial in the context of a currently divided society to promote cohesion against rising hate crime figures. HMD wants to engage with councils in order to bring people together; the trust has a range of resources for councils and good examples of activities undertaken on their website.

In the discussions that followed, members raised the following points:

Members agreed that it is very important that we commemorate the HMD, but questioned what could be done over communities becoming more cynical, buying into conspiracy theories, and spreading disinformation via social media? How are council leaders and schools going to properly inform and education people regarding these atrocities; members agreed that it is vital to target young people. In response to this, Claudia stated that there is an array of information and tools on the HMD website tailored towards schools and young people.

Members questioned if the Trust meets resistance, and how this is addressed? Claudia responded:

- that most communities HMD work with are very receptive to their work. However, there is a sense in some communities that where there is a lack of Jewish representation that it is not relevant. The Trust always responds to this by stating these messages are universal.
- Another challenge isn't around denial, but trivialisation; for example, questions are raised over why HMD should be remembered rather than any other atrocity that has taken place. The Trust's response is marking HMD does not come at the expense of commemorating anything else.

Members questioned why councils would not commemorate HMD, and asked if this was a funding issue, and if so, is there any grants councils can apply? Claudia responded that sadly, the HMD does not undertake grant funding, but can help with content such as music and education. The HMD have numerous ideas of impactful ways of marking the day

without money – these include large posters and life stories displayed in public buildings. Claudia admitted that whilst this is not grandeur, it still encourages learning and commemoration, and can be impactful.

Members agreed that the Board will take away this information, and will promote this within their own councils. Members also expressed that the LGA should commemorate this day.

### **Decisions**

1. Board members noted the input from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

## **50 Independent Review of Prevent**

The Chair requested item four, introduced by Rachel Duke, Adviser, was discussed first at the meeting, given the first presenter was running late. Members agreed to this re-organisation.

Rachel explained that Lord Carlile is leading an independent review of Prevent, which is due to report to the Secretary of State in June 2020. A recent call for evidence was launched inviting responses around a number of themes. This paper explores some of the issues for local authorities in Prevent delivery and seeks members' views in order to inform the LGA's submission.

The following comments were made, once the update concluded:

Members discussed the officer roundtables, and stated it would be helpful to hear feedback from these.

Members agreed that some local areas and their authorities have been critical of the Prevent programme, but noted that it does help build resilience in communities and prevent radicalisation. However, members around the table supported the programme, and commented that it is a powerful tool for local government to have at its disposal. Members agreed the work is both critical and essential.

Members discussed the 40 priority areas and sharing best practices for all of local government. However, members also commented that the Home Office (HO) needs to provide further support to councils – particularly those authorities who want to engage with the programme but are worried around their reputation. Members also discussed the need to engage with local critical voices of the programme. The Chair supported these points, and stated that some local authorities are meeting resistance in their communities and therefore are not able to deliver the programme effectively, and so further government support and funding is needed for this. The Chair also stated that further devolution in how Prevent is run is needed, given the variation in risk local areas face and how this is not a 'one-size-fits-all' issue.

Discussion also highlighted the concerns the Government has over how funding for this work is spent, with no robust evidence over the allocation of funding or methodology of ring-fencing this funding.

WRAP training, alongside education and preventative methods in schools was also discussed, as the programme provides an essential mechanism in identifying individuals likely to be radicalised. Vice Chairman, Cllr Katrina Wood highlighted the good work in her own authority Wycombe had undertaken.

Members also discussed how Prevent peers require further support, including partnership working, and noted that this work does not seem to be on the Police & Crime Commissioner's (PCC) agendas.

### **Decision**

1. The Board considered the issues raised in the paper.

## **51 Building Safety (to be sent as a supplemental agenda item)**

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced item five. This report updated members on the building safety developments since its last meeting. Marks update included details on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report, headlines of which included:

- Cladding played a key role in how the fire spread
- The handling by London Fire Brigade (LBF).
- The recommendations to fire and rescue services, local authorities, national government, LBF, ambulance service and the Metropolitan Police Service. These recommendations will be looked at in more detail in the coming weeks by the LGA; Mark commented that most seem sensible at first glance, but may cause implementation challenges.
- The report backed up calls regarding remediation work of buildings to be undertaken quicker.
- Discussed the accessibility of building plans to FRS, as they are built seems to offer a sensible solution, but needs to be linked to a to reform programme. Mark also commented on the checks on fire lifts in high rise buildings – this seems also to be a sensible solution, but raises questions regarding frequency of checks.
- Discussed the strategy of evacuations of high rise building in the event of a fire. The National Fire Chiefs Councils (NFCC) have asked for research on practicalities of moving from the stay-put to an evacuation strategy, particularly when there is only on stairwell. Mark stated that we know that failure of fire doors on the stairwell had a major impact on evacuation, given the temperature and had toxic smoke (due to the cladding). There was also consideration given to evacuation signals, and some mechanism for signalling if a decision is reached to evacuate in a fire situation.
- Discussed a personalised evacuation plan for disabled and vulnerable residents. Again, this seems like a sensible plan, but questions were asked over sub-letting and the intel of who lives in a property. This also poses security issues.
- MHCLG share some of these concerns regarding practicality of implementation.
- Lord porter, former LGA Chairman, commented in the Lords that the fire wasn't caused by the LFB, and that the report should have

been looked at this first.

Mark gave a further update on the other work being undertaken:

- Remediation work on social housing side is progressing well; the Joint Inspection Team is undertaking their fourth inspection tomorrow. Found so far that ratings that have handed over to councils are all category one, high- risk buildings. This includes buildings with sprinklers, and raises a fundamental issue regarding fire breaks and compartmentalisation. This poses the questions over the fundamentals of how we build buildings.
- Picking up issues around mortgages, and how residents cannot re-mortgage or sell properties.
- An update on the three recent fires in buildings 9that stand at less than 18c meters in Barking, Sutton and Crewe). These were timber framed constructions which burnt down quickly.
- The reform agenda, and how much this will cost to implement? The LGA have commissioned work from Savilles to look implications for the Housing Revenue Accounts.
- Mark updated members on the schools with the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) building construction method – experts are looking at councils that have this method of construction in their schools. Mark commented that this type of construction has been used more broadly than anticipated.

In the discussions that followed, member raised the following points:

Members commented on the LFB's performance, and noted that as the biggest fire authority in country, it raised concerns that they couldn't handle the volume of calls they needed to handle as well as information given out. The LFB said they would make responses and improve, following the Lakanal House fire, including how they handed calls. Members noted that it is vital these lessons need to be learned going forward, and questioned if the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee will be looking into this? Mark confirmed that they will. However, in response to this, the Chair started that LBF Firefighters on the ground should be commended for their bravery.

Member raised the role of councillors, including the information at their disposal during planning and building committees and approved building plans. Members went on to discuss the role of councillors when complaints have been made over building safety; what powers to challenge and change do they have, and how can councillors act when faced with these questions? In response to this, Mark stated that some of this will be picked up under the reform work and agreed that scrutiny remains an important function. Mark mentioned the LGA's Leadership Essentials courses, which empowers councillors to broaden their knowledge of the technical issues.

Cllr Eric Allen, who represents the London Borough of Sutton, updated members on the recent fire in his area. 23 flats were engulfed within fire within 15 minutes, however, there were luckily no fatalities as someone was able to raise the alarm. Cllr Allen went on to explain that the fire walls failed and builders and developers engaged in their own independent consultants to sign off on the buildings work. There was also no chain



reaction fire alarm system within these block, as is usual practice in Europe. Mark stated that he will be flagging the fire alarm system issue with the NFCC, as well as the regulatory sign-off framework.

Members requested that the LGA engage with Fire Prevention Association, as they have been lobbying government regarding timber framed buildings for years. Members also commented that it is not just about building safety, but methods of construction – some of these buildings will not be insurable once people realise the issue. Mark confirmed he will make contact with the Fire Prevention Association.

Members questioned what information residents are receiving over the stay put strategy? The Government and Sir Martin Moore-Bick are clear that compartmentalisation and the stay put strategy are fundamental aspects of fire safety policy going forward, and that the issue is that this is not what residents are hearing.

Members also agreed that council leadership and being seen at the site of the fire is essential; residents were angry that their local leaders were not present, and therefore showed no signs of compassion.

### **Decision**

1. Members noted and commented on the LGA's building safety related work.

## **52 Update Paper**

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced item six. Mark stated that the report outlines issues of interest to the Board, not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Members then made the following comments:

Cllr Jo Beavis updated members that an emergency meeting for the National FGM Centre will take place on 6 December 2019, to discuss the ongoing funding issues (due to cease as of April 2020). Member requested a write up of this be circulated at the next Board meeting in January, and commented that whilst there have been some critics of the Centre not reaching a self-sustainable status, some public safety issues – such as FGM – are not easily fundable and do not appeal to grant-funding applications.

Members also discussed modern slavery, the LGA's ongoing work on this, as well as the increasing awareness of this crime within the media. Cllr Alan Rhodes, Member Champion for Tackling Abuse, Exploitation and Modern Slavery, also updated members on his recent meeting with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (following the last Board meeting in September), and commented that this was a positive meeting, where next steps and actively working with the Commissioner's office was discussed.

### **Decisions**

1. Members of the Board noted and commented on the paper.
2. A write up of the National FGM Centre, including its emergency meeting on the 6 December 2019, be circulated to the Board at the next meeting.

### **53 Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting**

Members agreed to the note of the last Safer & Stronger Communities Board, which took place on 2 September 2019.

#### **Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Katrina Wood	Wycombe District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Hannah Dalton	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Members	Cllr Eric Allen	London Borough of Sutton
	Cllr Mohan Iyengar	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
	Cllr Andrew Joy	Hampshire County Council
	Cllr John Pennington	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Dave Stewart	Isle of Wight Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Jim Beall	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
	Cllr Farah Hussain	Redbridge London Borough Council
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		