

29 November 2018

## Update on Other Board Business

### Purpose of report

For information and comment.

### Summary

Members to note the following updates:

- Launch of [‘A Connected Society. A strategy for tackling loneliness’](#)
- Carers
- Autism
- Accommodation and support for asylum seekers
- The Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill
- Sleep-ins
- Housing
- Suicide prevention
- Armed Forces Veterans

### Recommendations

Members of the Community Wellbeing Board are asked to:

1. **Provide oral updates** on any other outside bodies / external meetings they may have attended on behalf of the Community Wellbeing Board since the last meeting; and
2. **Note** the updates contained in the report.

### Action

As directed by members.

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## **Update on Other Board Business**

### **Launch of [‘A Connected Society. A strategy for tackling loneliness’](#)**

1. The Prime Minister launched [‘A Connected Society. A strategy for tackling loneliness’](#) on 15 October 2018. The LGA welcomed the strategy but in order to maximise the cost effectiveness of loneliness initiatives we urged government to reverse reductions to councils’ public health budgets and plug the funding gap facing adult social care.
2. Since publication the LGA have had discussions with DCMS about how best we can engage local councils in the work. We are currently discussing holding a joint DCMS and LGA event in 2019 to discuss how the sector can best support the strategy objectives and showcase best practice.
3. We are also looking to commission some guidance on best practice between principal authorities and parish and town councils. This will be produced in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and will be funded by the MHCLG grant that is provided the LGA to support work between principal, parish and town councils.

### **Carers**

4. We are planning to publish a guidance and case study publication in December 2018. This will highlight a number of innovative services delivered by, and in partnership with, local authorities.

### **Autism**

5. DHSC has set up task and finish groups to help drive progress in delivering the current autism strategy before a formal review of the Strategy in 2019. The LGA have attended two task and finish groups and the Executive Group.
6. The Autism Self-Assessment Framework (SAF) 2018 is currently out for completion by councils. The SAF assists and prompts local areas in reviewing how they are doing in relation to the Autism Strategy and helps them to map out their local priorities. As in previous years the information submitted will be collated and analysed by Public Health England. Responses to the exercise are asked for by Monday 10 December 2018.
7. We recently highlighted the role of local authorities in meeting needs of people with autism in articles in the First magazine.

### **Accommodation and support for asylum seekers**

8. The member-led LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group reports to both the Community Wellbeing Board and Children and Young People Board. The Task Group, chaired by Cllr Simmonds, met with the Immigration Minister on 1 November and Cllr Simmonds and other members gave evidence at the Home Affairs Committee on 21 November. The LGA has been asking for effective engagement with local government as part of the Home Office’s procurement exercise for the ten year contracts for the support and accommodation of asylum seekers dispersed across the UK. The Government

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has committed to councils being represented on the governance arrangements, both at member and officer levels and locally, regionally and nationally, and committed to sharing information, providing oversight and looking at funding impacts on local areas. More details as they become available will be placed on the [webpage](#).

### **The Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill**

9. We have long called for an overhaul of the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) process to create a fully-funded, simpler and less bureaucratic, and this Bill provides a crucial opportunity for reform. The LGA has [welcomed](#) government amendments to the Bill that reflect concerns expressed by the sector, particularly care providers. The LGA has provided a draft letter for councils to share with their MPs that indicated support for the Bill subject to these improvements and this may be updated following the discussion of these amendments at report stage in the Lords. The LGA will continue to work across and with Government and national partners to ensure the Bill is implementable in practice and fully funded so that councils can work with their partners to ensure people who lack capacity are placed at the heart of decisions made about their care.

### **Sleep-ins**

10. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has published updated [guidance](#) on calculating the national minimum wage for sleep-in shifts. This takes account of the Court of Appeal ruling that providers do not have to pay the national minimum wage for sleep-in shifts. While this represents the current legal position, Unison has applied to the Supreme Court for permission to appeal the ruling and the outcome is expected in early 2019. We have consistently called for care workers to be paid fairly for the work they do, but also highlighted that the funding pressures facing adult social care means any increase in pay must be paid for by genuinely new Government funding.

### **Housing**

11. The 2018 Budget confirmed an additional £55 million in 2018/19 for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to provide home aids and adaptations for disabled children and adults on low incomes. The funding will further help disabled children and adults on low incomes to modify their homes to support prevention and independence. Demand for DFG is only likely to grow as the numbers of disabled people increases and the vast majority of current and future generations of older people will (and want to) remain in their own home. We have consistently said that DFG funding needs to be ongoing and to keep pace with demand from all age groups as part of a wider response to local housing, health and wellbeing priorities. The Government's independent review of DFG, which we fed into, will shortly publish its findings. We are also working with the Centre for Ageing Better and Age UK on a guide for councils about the strategic use of the DFG to support independent living, which will shortly be published.
12. We continue to seek to influence the Government's next phase of supported housing reforms. We broadly welcomed the decision to keep funding all types of supported housing through Housing Benefit, because it removes the uncertainty that was impacting upon supply, but we are concerned to ensure that the decision does not further add to the shortfall in the Housing Benefit subsidy with councils expected to fund the gap.

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13. The Government also announced that it will work with providers, local authorities, membership bodies and resident representatives over the coming months to develop a robust oversight regime. This work aims to ensure quality and value for money across the whole supported housing sector. In addition, a review of housing related support will be undertaken to better understand how housing and support currently fit together. Following a steer from Lead Members and feedback from council advisers, we continue to press for:
- 13.1. A sustainable funding model for supported housing that will ensure councils can reduce homelessness and help older and other vulnerable people.
  - 13.2. Councils to have the leading role in overseeing and ensuring the provision of housing for vulnerable groups is good quality, value for money, and fits in with the wider local services offered in places. This must be properly resourced.
  - 13.3. We are concerned that the review of support costs is happening at a slower pace to putting in place new oversight measures for the housing costs and are pressing for urgent clarity on the timeframe and scope of the review. We are concerned that the current proposals leave the fundamental issue of defining housing and support costs unresolved.
14. We ensured strong local government engagement at Government workshops on 31 October and 15 November to develop options for the housing costs oversight regime and await the Government's response. We will seek a further steer from Lead Members in due course.

### **Suicide prevention**

15. The LGA worked with Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) to publish a new [guide](#) for councillors about effectively scrutinising local suicide prevention plans. We continue to work with ADPH, DHSC and Public Health England on a suicide prevention sector led improvement offer (SLI) for councils. At the time of writing, 123 councils had completed the suicide prevention self-assessment, which is an excellent 81 per cent response rate. The findings will shape the SLI offer and work we lead in this policy area.

### **Armed Forces Veterans**

16. Following commemorations of the centenary of the Armistice, the Government published its [Strategy for our Veterans](#). It was positive to see that the strategy recognised the role of local authorities and other sectors in delivering services that support and empower veterans. A [consultation](#) has also been launched to support implementation of the strategy and runs until 21 February 2019. All councils have signed the voluntary Armed Forces Covenant and are committed to honouring their obligations to those who have served their country. The strategy also includes proposals to better identify veterans. This has always been a challenge for councils and it is pleasing that the strategy recognises the need for better data on the number of veterans in our communities. The Strategy was also debated in both Houses on Thursday 15 November and our [briefing](#) to Parliamentarians highlighted the good work that councils are doing on the Covenant.

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Officers will prepare a draft consultation response for Lead Members' clearance and Board Members are invited to let Laura Caton ([Laura.Caton@local.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.Caton@local.gov.uk)) know any points or case studies for inclusion.

17. Last month's budget confirmed an additional £10 million funding for the mental health of veterans which will help to ensure that veterans in need of mental health support can access timely, effective and integrated services. We have argued that the funding should be available to veterans through councils who want to work with armed forces charities, health and other local partners to further strengthen mental health support for veterans and ensure it links to wider mental health activity.