

## **Safer and Stronger Communities Board - End of Year Report**

### **Background**

1. At its meeting in September the Board considered its priorities for 2018/19 and agreed five overarching themes:
  - 1.1 Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion;
  - 1.2 Community safety;
  - 1.3 Blue light services and civil resilience;
  - 1.4 Licensing and regulation; and
  - 1.5 Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners.
2. Alongside these Board priorities, the contribution the Board would make to cross-cutting priorities identified by the Leadership Board – in particular supporting councils to respond to the Grenfell tragedy and Britain's exit from the EU – was also recognised in the work plan.
3. This paper provides an overview of the achievements delivered against these themes, and seeks an initial steer from the Board on its priorities for 2019/20. This section of the paper will subsequently be developed into a full paper for consideration at the first meeting of the 2019/20 Board cycle in September.

### **Issues**

#### **Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion**

4. Over the year we have delivered five leadership essentials courses for elected members across Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion, attracting councillors from 36 different councils.
5. We have continued to support the work of the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE), both at strategic and operational levels, including assisting SIGCE colleagues to deliver four counter-extremism seminars for councils since September; hosting the seminar on leadership in countering extremism at the LGA in November. We have continued to take a lead role in growing and facilitating the [SIGCE's online Knowledge Hub](#) (KHub), the main output for the SIGCE's work, to help share good practice across councils and partners, including developing case studies and supporting peer-to-peer learning. Membership of the KHub now includes representatives from 77 councils, alongside colleagues from central government and other statutory agencies. We also commissioned work on engaging with communities around extremism, which has fed into the establishment of a SIGCE working group on Far Right extremism. The LGA is supporting the working group's programme, which is looking to develop new resources to support local engagement activity.

6. We launched a new [KHub site for Prevent](#) to provide support and share practice on the delivery of the Prevent duty, which now has membership from over 60 councils. We also established a new Prevent Champions Network in the North East to help share practice, knowledge and approaches amongst councils in the region, which has now met twice over the year.
7. Following the publication of the new CONTEST strategy in June 2018, we have met with Home Office officials on a number of occasions to explore the implications for councils and ensure councils' views are heard, including at the Board in March and hosting a meeting of senior officers involved in new CONTEST pilots in February. These themes will be explored further at a plenary session on leadership in Prevent and counter-extremism at the LGA conference in July.
8. In November Cllr Blackburn met with Baroness Williams, Minister of State for Countering Extremism, to discuss national and local efforts in tackling extremism. The meeting explored the evolving nature of extremist threats and the need for adequate support for local authorities to respond effectively.
9. In January we submitted our [response](#) to the Commission for Countering Extremism's call for evidence setting out councils' core role in countering extremism, the impact of extremism on local areas and some of the challenges facing local authorities in their work. Cllr Blackburn was invited to sit on the Commission's Expert Group, which is providing the Lead Commissioner with advice and challenge in her first 12 months of the Commission.
10. We published comprehensive new [guidance on Building cohesive communities](#) in March, which explores councils' role in cohesion and integration and includes a number of case studies highlighting good practice.

### **Community safety**

11. Given the ongoing politician and media focus on **serious violence and knife crime**, this has been a key area of work for both members of the board and officers. Cllr Simon Blackburn has attended monthly Serious Violence Taskforce meetings since the Government's Strategy was published in April 2018, including at the November meeting providing members with a 'deep dive' account of how Blackpool has taken steps to tackle county lines issues. LGA officers continue to liaise with the Home Office on plans for a new legal duty on serious violence, including submitting a response to the Government consultation on this in May 2019. The LGA published a report on '[Breaking the Cycle of Youth Violence](#)', including a series of case studies highlighting how councils and their partners are taking the lead on tackling youth violence early intervention.
12. The LGA provided both written and oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee as part of their inquiry into [serious violence](#), as well as briefing peers ahead of the House of Lords debates on the Offensive Weapons Bill, which focused on the introduction of Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs). Officers provided briefings for two LGA representatives who took part in private ministerial roundtables on education and healthcare as part of the Prime Minister's Serious Violence Summit.

13. Members of the Board and officers have attended a range of events considering serious violence, including an event on enhancing the relationship between the police and local authorities; an international symposium on violent crime; the Children's Commissioner's gang's summit, and the National County Lines Coordination Centre Conference. The Chair of the Board visited two charities involved in early intervention work designed to prevent young people from becoming involved in knife crime. Additionally, we hosted an event on county lines and a best practice event with the successful local government bid leads of the Trusted Relationships Fund.
14. In November, we held a successful event on disrupting **modern slavery**; this was attended by 70 delegates from a number of councils.
15. We commissioned a document of to publicise case studies of councils' work on modern slavery, which is expected to be published in July, alongside guidance for councils on hand car washes. We have developed a short councillor guide to tackling modern slavery, which is also expected to be published in July, and are continuing discussions with Nottingham University's Rights Lab about the scope for a piece of behavioural insights intended to influence consumer behaviour. Colleagues in the LGA's procurement team continue to provide support to councils on developing transparency statements intended to address the risk of modern slavery in supply chains; more than 100 councils (and the LGA) have now published statements voluntarily, and the LGA website includes a number of tools to support work on this.
16. Finally, alongside our proactive work on modern slavery, a significant amount of time has been spent feeding into various pieces of Home Office work on modern slavery, including a consultation on the first responder role and the development of statutory guidance under the Modern Slavery Act.
17. On **domestic abuse**, we provided both a [written evidence submission](#) and [oral evidence](#) to the Home Affairs Committee as part of their inquiry into [domestic abuse](#). We also [responded](#) to the Government's consultation on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill, and Cllr Blackburn gave [oral evidence](#) to the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill in May 2019. Cllr Blackburn and Cllr Lower have attended the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse throughout the year, and officers have continued to liaise with Home Office and MHCLG officials regarding their proposals in this area. We submitted a joint [response](#) with the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to the Home Office's [consultation](#) on preventing and tackling forced marriage.
18. The LGA has continued to support the National **FGM** Centre this year in partnership with Barnardo's, with Cllr Anita Lower continuing to chair the Centre's Advisory Group. The Group's membership has been reviewed and expanded to give a greater cross-sector perspective and now includes more education and early years partners. We have supported the Centre in developing their sustainability strategy and in promoting the work of the Centre both in public and with key government departments.
19. On **water safety**, in December 2019 the LGA submitted evidence to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) review of responsibilities for beach safety, in consultation with

the LGA's Coastal Special Interest Group. Cllr James Dawson recently met with the MCA who confirmed that the review will be published in November 2019.

20. Following discussions between the LGA and the Home Office team responsible for publishing Fire and Rescue Service data, from 31 January 2019 the Home Office new incident level dataset covering flooding and water rescue incidents has been published by the Home Office, which will enable better analysis of the risk around water safety.
21. LGA officers continue to work with the Home Office's **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Advisory Board** on the use of the ASB 2014 powers.. The LGA convened a private roundtable with council officers, including planning, environmental health and community safety teams, to learn about their experiences of responding to unauthorised developments and encampments.

### **Blue light services and civil resilience**

22. We ran two leadership essentials courses for **fire and rescue authorities** and five regional masterclasses on Inclusion and Diversity aimed at fire and rescue authority members. We have reviewed our support offer to fire and rescue authorities in association with the Improvement Team.
23. We held the LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition in Brighton in mid-March and produced an accompanying publication: '[Beyond Hackitt: protecting the vulnerable in the years ahead](#)'. The publication looks at the building-safety work coming out of the Hackitt review which may see significant additional burdens for the fire sector and also considers new activity within the sector. The latter includes the inspection regime and the related LGA support offer, major incidents like wildfires, the ongoing response to the Kerslake report, water safety, behavioural insights techniques, and protection from scams.
24. We have worked with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government on the fire service aspects of both the ongoing building safety programme and the development of policy in the wake of the Hackitt Report.
25. We have worked with the NFCC and the Home Office through a variety of working groups and workshops to develop a strong submission to the anticipated Spending Review which has support from across the fire sector. We will continue to support this activity to its conclusion.
26. We have continued to work with Her Majesties Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire & Rescue in their work on the first cycle of fire and rescue inspections and in the development of a corporate governance inspection programme.
27. We held our annual **Police and Crime Panels (PCPs)** workshop and commissioned revised guidance for PCPs which will be launched at the 2019 workshop in July. The National Association of Police and Crime Panels' application to become a SIG was approved by the LGA Leadership Board.

28. We published an updated councillor guide to **civil contingencies** which built in the learning gleaned from councils which responded to emergencies in 2017 and 2018. Alongside this, we published a joint document with Solace focusing on preparedness, response and recovery in relation to two case studies; the Manchester Arena attack and a flooding event in Suffolk. We held a further councillor civil resilience masterclass at the end of 2018, and two more are scheduled for June 2019.
29. We worked with MHCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division to develop a new approach to handling requests for national mutual following exceptional emergencies. The process takes into account the lack of resources available to support this process, while also aiming to streamline how requests are handled between the LGA and Government.

### **Licensing and regulation**

30. In September, the cross-industry working group set up to look at taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing published a report with a number of recommendations for government. The Department for Transport published their response to the recommendations in February. This, accepted many of the group's recommendations including those that the LGA (a member of the working group) has been calling for, most notably that Government intend to legislate to strengthen taxi and PHV licensing. Government also launched a consultation on new statutory guidance for taxi and PHV licensing authorities on how to use their taxi licensing powers to protect children and vulnerable adults. Again, the proposals included a number of proposals which the LGA has been calling for, which our consultation response welcomed.
31. We launched the new National Register of Taxi Licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3). This allows licensing authorities to record details of where a hackney carriage or PHV drivers' licence has been refused or revoked and to check new applicants against the register. Several authorities have now started to use the register to support their licensing work, and the Government has announced it intends to mandate use of the register in future.
32. We have developed and published a range of guidance for councils including guidance for councils on developing an approach to mandatory CCTV in taxis and PHVs; a handbook to support new and existing members of licensing committees with their role in administering the Licensing Act 2003; and guidance on taking a whole council approach to tackling reducing gambling harm – this was circulated to all authorities by GambleAware. The Licensing Act handbook will be complemented by a new set of case studies exploring approaches to managing the night-time economy.
33. Following the announcement of the reduction in maximum stakes for fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) last year, the LGA and others successfully lobbied government to introduce the new £2 stake sooner than originally set out in the Budget, including jointly commissioning research from Cebr to highlight the social cost of a delay in implementation. The change was subsequently brought forward to April 2019. In October, the LGA submitted evidence to the Home Office to inform the new Alcohol Strategy which is expected to be published later in 2019.
34. The LGA has become a Friend Against Scams (FAS) partner, to help promote the initiative with councils. As a partner organisation the LGA has made a pledge to actively promote the

FAS initiative with our members and promote awareness of scams and how they can be prevented.

**Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners**

35. Last year we responded to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) market study in to the funerals and cremations market. Following the study report the CMA announced their intention to launch a full market investigation in to the market. Some of the issues under investigation are directly relevant to local authority crematoria, including customer choice and decision-making, price setting and density of crematoria facilities. The LGA will continue to work with the CMA during its investigation to ensure that the local government perspective is taken into account.

**Supporting councils to respond to the Grenfell tragedy**

36. Following publication of the final report from Dame Judith Hackitt's review of building regulations and fire safety (which reflected the LGA's position) we responded to a number of Government consultations including proposed bans on the use of combustible materials on the exterior of high-rise buildings and the use of desktop studies, and revisions to the building regulations guidance on fire safety (Approved Document B). Although Dame Judith had not recommended it in her final report, the LGA was successful in securing a ban on the use of combustible materials on the exterior of high-rise buildings, and in securing restrictions on the use of desktop studies. We await further clarification on revisions to the building regulations guidance.
37. Since the publication of the Hackitt Review the LGA, along with the Health and Safety Executive, Local Authority Building Control, and the National Fire Chiefs Council, has been part of the Joint Regulators Group, which is providing the Government with advice on how to establish and transition to a new regulatory structure. The consultation on a new building safety regulatory framework is expected to be published by the end of May 2019, and new legislation is expected to be in place by 2021.
38. Having worked with councils and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to identify those private high-rise buildings with Aluminium Composite Material cladding, we successfully lobbied for the Government to pay the estimated £200 million costs of taking remedial action on high-rise private residential buildings where owners were not doing so themselves. Building owners will be expected to apply for this funding over a period of three months from May 2019.
39. We have established the Joint Inspection Team. This multi-disciplinary team, which is funded by MHCLG and hosted by the LGA, will support councils to take further action against building owners where necessary.
40. We have also continued wider work to explore issues with external wall insulation and large panel system buildings, and provide support to councils on these issues. This included contacting local authority leaders to conduct an LGA-data collection exercise on large panel buildings. In partnership with the National Housing Federation, we have also established an online Building Safety Knowledge Hub, which provides social housing building owners with resources relating to various building safety issues, and a forum to allow them to discuss emerging local and national challenges and share best practice.

**Britain’s exit from the EU**

- 41. Various areas of the team’s work have been a focus in relation to general Brexit and no-deal planning; regulatory services, civil contingencies and community cohesion. We have had some success in urging Government to provide greater clarity for councils on the legislative changes that will impact regulatory services in particular, but are continuing to make the case that Government should use the delay in the Brexit process to provide support and resources to councils on this issue.
- 42. The team has regularly briefed the LGA’s Brexit task group on concerns that a no deal Brexit could impact the timely operation of ports, and the resilience implications of traffic backlogs, to reinforce concerns raised by member councils. Officers have also been engaging with local resilience forums to identify and highlight concerns, and contributed to the development of Home Office guidance on cohesion issues and Brexit.

**Conferences, events and media**

- 43. The Board ran a range of events over the last year in addition to those listed above, including the annual licensing conference and the annual fire conference.
- 44. Over the last year the Board issued press releases or responded to stories on car clocking, counterfeit alcohol, fake toys, food hygiene ratings, food sampling, counterfeit cigarettes, modern slavery, shisha bars, second-hand tyres, underage knife sales, fake goods, FGM, domestic abuse, serious violence, Fixed Odds Betting Terminal stakes, county lines, anti-social behaviour, animal welfare inspections, burial fees, fake charity bag collections, CCTV, child gangs, environmental health budgets, the late night levy, medical examiners, pub gaming machines, scams, taxi driver assaults.

**2019/20 Priorities**

- 45. It is expected that the themes for the 2019/20 work priorities will remain broadly consistent with 2018/9, with a number of workstreams continuing into the new Board cycle.
- 46. The table below sets out some initial thinking on workstreams that will continue into the new Board cycle:

| <b>Priority area</b>                    | <b>Proposed activity</b>  |
|---|---|
| Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support the work of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE), including developing and delivering a support offer for elected members, facilitating the online Knowledge Hub, and feeding in to the outputs of the SIGCE’s working groups.</li> <li>• Support councils in their work to deliver the Prevent duty, counter-extremism and community cohesion, including through the delivery of</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>further training courses and events, facilitation of the Prevent Knowledge Hub, the publication of guidance and developing a local authority cohesion network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate and feedback sector views about the Prevent duty once the independent review is announced.</li> <li>• Collate and feedback sector views to central government on the CONTEST pilots.</li> <li>• Collate and feedback sector views on counter-extremism policy and practice to central government and the Commission for Countering Extremism.</li> </ul>   |
| Community safety                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby Government and Parliament in regard to the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Bill.</li> <li>• Support LGA input to the Serious Violence Taskforce and provide support to councils on this agenda.</li> <li>• Support LGA input into the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse.</li> <li>• Hold a national conference on tackling anti-social behaviour, to help share best practice.</li> <li>• Engage with government and support councils on a range of community safety issues, including police and crime panels, gypsy and travellers and burglary.</li> <li>• Lobby Government and Parliament in regard to ongoing funding for the National FGM Centre.</li> </ul> |
| Blue light services and civil resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the fire and rescue sector work on fire reform initiatives (inspection, standards, workforce).</li> <li>• Support fire and rescue authorities to respond to inspection.</li> <li>• Hold masterclasses on Culture, Inclusion and Diversity in the fire and rescue sector.</li> <li>• Publish a Scrutiny Toolkit for Fire Authority members and produce an</li> </ul>  |

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|   | accompanying eLearning module.  |
| Licensing and regulation                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby government to bring forward taxi licensing legislation as soon as possible and continue to promote the use of NR3.</li> <li>• Lobby government to provide sustainable funding for vital public protection services and introduce a proper new burdens process that enables councils to increase/ invest in staff.</li> <li>• Work with Home Office officials to explore an increase in licensing fees.</li> <li>• Support BEIS with shaping the development of Primary Authority in licensing.</li> </ul>  |
| Support councils to respond to Grenfell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with government and local authorities to identify high-risk, high-rise residential buildings, including those with combustible cladding systems and to remediate as necessary. Lobbying for local government to receive the support needed for this work.</li> <li>• Working with government to implement the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's Review of fire safety, with legislation due to come into force by 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Responding to Government consultations, including on the new building safety regulatory framework; and</li> <li>○ Lobbying government to ensure that councils and fire and rescue authorities are funded to implement changes as needed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support local government to respond to the changing regulatory environment through an ongoing improvement offer</li> </ul> |
| Britain's exit from the EU              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent the views of councils in meetings across Whitehall, ensuring that adequate guidance and funding are made available to councils to deal with Brexit.</li> </ul>   |
| Crematoria                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to respond to the Competition and Markets Authority into the funeral and crematoria market.</li> </ul>  |

47. Officers would welcome Board Members' views on the areas they would like to focus on.

### **Implications for Wales**

48. We will work with colleagues at the Welsh LGA to identify areas where our work will be applicable to Wales, and where WLGA may wish to use our work as a basis for Welsh specific work of its own.

### **Financial Implications**

49. The work priorities identified for 2019/20 will be delivered within the planned staffing budget, which includes dedicated capacity to support work on cohesion, extremism and Prevent, and dedicated capacity to support Grenfell work.

### **Next steps**

50. The Board are asked to reflect on the work delivered this year, and consider and comment on their priorities for 2019/20.