

## 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

#### 1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and noted apologies received (which can be found at **Appendix A**).

No declarations of interest were made.

#### 4 Independent Review of Prevent

The Chair reordered the agenda as one of the presenters was delayed. Rachel Duke, Adviser, introduced the item.

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. The paper to the Board explored some of the issues for local authorities in Prevent delivery and sought members' views in order to inform the LGA's submission. Rachel however pointed out that the appointment of Lord Carlile to lead the review was subject to a judicial review.

The following comments were made:

Members asked how the judicial review would impact on the timing of the Review. Rachel explained the timing of the Review had been set out in legislation and if there was a delay either the legislation would have to be changed or the review's timetable would be truncated.

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 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.
2. The final submission to the Review to be signed off by the Board's Lead Members.

## **2 Domestic Abuse**

Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner, introduced item two. Nicole's presentation focused on:

- The synergies between community safety and resilience, and her role.
- Her appointment had taken place six weeks before the meeting, and she had been appointed 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 forward in terms of services and a coordinated response at a national level.
- 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 & office will continue regardless, however, the Bill would have given her role additional powers which would have been helpful – for example, the ability to lay reports in Parliament. In addition to this, Nicole stated that whilst she could not give any definite assurances, she believed it likely that the Bill would come back in the new session of Parliament, given the cross-party support and discussions she has had with leading parliamentarians.
- 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 with the other Commissioners, to highlight the Commissioner's function, as well as handle issues where there is an overlap with the other Commissioners' remits.

- 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 where practice ought to be, and would be drawing on previous mapping exercises. 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 provision within local areas looks like (including examples of coordinated community response), as well as identifying key early intervention practices to reduce and eventually minimise crisis points.
- The Commissioner said she would also be looking at Domestic Homicide Reviews to understand what could be learned from them and how the recommendations are being implemented at a local level.
- The Commissioner said one of her priorities would be 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 proposed statutory duty to provide accommodation to victims noting that this would require engagement with a range of statutory services and there may need to be a duty to cooperate placed on them. They also noted proposals from some to extend the duty to provide wider domestic abuse services as well.
- Members highlighted the need for early intervention and prevention, and stated there was an opportunity to do this through the revised curriculum in schools and PSHE to educate young people around healthy relationships.
- Members discussed how lack of funding to local government is the key in every issue the sector is facing; members noted that the £15 million made available to local areas to bid for was not a substitute for the need for funding the new responsibilities councils would have.
  - 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 the statutory duty on providing accommodation would entail, and how it would be funded; the Commissioner stated that costing this properly is key if the duty was to be broadened, and noted that her view was it was odd to support some services with a duty and not others. It would therefore be helpful to have views on what is realistic and what the constraints faced by local government are.
- Members discussed PCCs work on DA, as well as Local Partnership Boards 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?
  - 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, but there had been some mapping of perpetrator

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programmes; there needed to be more of a strategy to perpetrator interventions including taking a more punitive approach, and a better understanding of what works; mapping is still in the very early stages of completion, and advice on how to complete it would be useful as the staff in councils who responded often did not have an overview of all the services provided; and an Annual Report will be presented to Parliament and the Home Secretary (with the latter having limited powers to change the report, given the independent jurisdiction the Commissioner has in her role).

- Two issues raised by members included 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 (FGM), breast flattening, forced marriage, honour based violence, and abuse in the workplace. Will the Commissioner's office 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 the Commissioner acknowledged the obvious overlaps with other issues. The Commissioner is in contact with the Victims Commissioner, agreeing on where their respective focuses will be.
  - o In relation to single sex provision of refuge services, the Commissioner commented that there had been lots of debate about whether Bill should be gendered. The Commissioner noted there were a variety of victims of domestic abuse, and that services should not be commissioned on a gender neutral basis. There should be some women only spaces, but also support for men – though there tended not to take up refuge space so men might want a range of other 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, and to challenge views about the acceptability of violence n relationships.
- Members also mentioned the work of the multi-agency safeguarding hubs.

The Commissioner thanked members for their time, and expressed her hopes to create an active partnership with all councils, and the Board, in order to influence delivery at a local level. In terms of driving engagement she would be interested in local government's views as a statutory duty was not the only way to do that, and other means might work better. 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 watched this, have now grown up thinking this behaviour is normal.
3. A need for nationwide access to accredited perpetrator programmes for local areas, so they know what programmes they can refer perpetrators to that actually work.

### **Decisions**

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

## **3 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 atrocities after 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 (HMDT) – a charity set up by Government to promote HMD and support other organisations to mark it – was attending the Board's meeting to provide an update on their work and explore how they can assist councils planning 2020 events. Claudia stated the Trust encourages people to learn the 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 to cater to different audiences. The HMDT 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 as a result of attending a HMD event.

Claudia concluded it is crucial in the currently context to promote cohesion against rising hate crime figures. HMDT 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 HMDT website tailored towards schools and young people.

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

- That most communities HMDT work with are very receptive to their work. However, in some communities where there is a lack of Jewish representation people questioned HMD's relevance to them. 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 other atrocities are not commemorated. The Trust's response is marking HMD does not come at the expense of commemorating anything else, and these events need to be remembered and people educated about them.

Members questioned how councils could be encouraged to help mark HMD, and asked if there was any funding available to mark it. Claudia responded that unfortunately, the HMDT 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. Members also noted the important role they could play in helping others, like inter-faith groups mark HMD.

Members agreed that the Board would highlight the importance to councils of being involved in marking HMD, and members would promote this within their own councils. Members also asked what the LGA would do to commemorate HMD.

### **Decisions**

1. Board members noted the input from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.
2. Details of the resources available from the HMDT to be circulated to councils and councils encouraged to mark HMD.
3. The LGA to consider how it could mark HMD.

## **5 Building Safety**

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

- Cladding played a key role in how the fire spread
- The identification of issues in the response by London Fire Brigade (LBF).
- The recommendations to fire and rescue services, local authorities, national government, LBF, the ambulance service and the Metropolitan Police Service to improve their response to large scale incidents like the fire at Grenfell Tower. These recommendations will be looked at in more detail in the coming weeks by the LGA.

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- The report backed up calls for the remediation of buildings with ACM cladding to be undertaken quicker.
- The accessibility of building plans to FRS and other recommendations which are also being considered as part of government's response to the Hackitt Review's recommendations.
- The ability to change from a 'stay put' to a 'simultaneous evacuation' strategy. There were practical implications of being able to fight a fire while also evacuating residents that needed to be explored further, including the role of fire doors in ensuring the continued safety of stairwells and the impact that toxic smoke might have on the ability of people to self-evacuate.
- The need for personalised emergency evacuation plans for disabled and vulnerable residents, which would require a number of practical issues to be addressed to be able to be put in place.
- Lord Porter, former LGA Chairman, had responded to the publication of the report in the debate on it in the House of Lords. He had referenced the views of survivors and the families of victims who seemed satisfied with the conclusions of the report, but had noted that the Inquiry had been conducted in the wrong order as the crucial point was to ensure buildings were not built with combustible cladding.

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

- Remediation work on social housing blocks with ACM cladding is progressing well; the Joint Inspection Team would shortly be undertaking their fourth inspection.
- There were emerging issues around advice to surveyors based on MHCLG's advice notes and the impact this was having on mortgage valuations, making it more difficult to re-mortgage or sell properties in blocks with ACM cladding.
- An update on the three recent fires in buildings which were less than 18 metres in height in Barking, Sutton and Crewe. These were timber framed constructions which burnt down quickly.
- Implementation of the Hackitt recommendations. To inform this work the LGA have commissioned work to look at the costs of implementing the new building safety requirements and the wider implications of this for councils' Housing Revenue Accounts.
- The work around buildings using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their construction methods. Following on from the work the LGA, DfE and SCOSS had taken to highlight issues with RAAC roofs to councils and education establishments it had become clear 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 had struggled to handle the volume of calls. This was an important issue as an area identified for improvement after the Lakanal House fire had been call handling. 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 when applications came to planning committees for approval. Members went on to discuss the role of councillors when complaints have been made over building safety; what powers to

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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 Hackitt implementation 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, and that a new course on building safety was available.

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 why the fire had spread so quickly, and the need for fire alarm systems. Mark stated that the LGA was in conversation with the NFCC around these sorts of issues to inform its response to the government's consultation on further technical changes to Approved Document B.

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.

### **Decision**

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

## **6 Update Paper**

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced item six. Mark stated that the report outlined 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 Advisory Board will take place on 6 December 2019, to discuss the ongoing funding issues (due to cease as of April 2020). Member requested a briefing be circulated, 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 issue, 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 briefing of the National FGM Centre's position be circulated to the Board.

## **7 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