

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Agenda

Monday, 15 June 2020
11.00 am

Zoom videoconference

To: Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board
cc: Named officers for briefing purposes

www.local.gov.uk

This meeting is



Safer & Stronger Communities Board
15 June 2020

There will be a meeting of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board at **11.00 am on Monday, 15 June 2020** via Zoom videoconference

Political Group meetings:

The group meetings will take place in advance of the meeting. Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

Apologies:

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Conservative: | Group Office: 020 7664 3223 | email: lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk |
| Labour: | Group Office: 020 7664 3263 | email: martha.lauchlan@local.gov.uk |
| Liberal Democrat: | Group Office: 020 7664 3235 | email: libdem@local.gov.uk |
| Independent: | Group Office: 020 7664 3224 | email: independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk |

LGA Contact:

Jonathan Bryant
Jonathan.bryant@local.gov.uk 07464652746

Carers' Allowance

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of £9.00 per hour or £10.55 if receiving London living wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

Social Media

The LGA is committed to using social media in a co-ordinated and sensible way, as part of a strategic approach to communications, to help enhance the reputation of local government, improvement engagement with different elements of the community and drive efficiency. Please feel free to use social media during this meeting. **However, you are requested not to use social media during any confidential items.**

The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgassc

Safer & Stronger Communities Board – Membership 2019/2020

| Councillor | Authority |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Conservative (7) | |
| Cllr Katrina Wood (Vice Chairman) | Wycombe District Council |
| 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 Lois Samuel | West Devon Borough Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Richard Auger | Daventry District Council |
| Cllr James Gartside | Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Labour (7) | |
| Cllr Simon Blackburn (Chair) | Blackpool 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 Johnson Situ | Southwark Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Daniel Francis | Bexley Council |
| Cllr Clive Johnson | Medway Council |
| Cllr Tim Roca | Westminster City Council |
| Liberal Democrat (2) | |
| Cllr Bridget Smith (Deputy Chair) | South Cambridgeshire District Council |
| Cllr Jeremy Hilton | Gloucestershire County Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Jon Ball | Ealing Council |
| Independent (2) | |
| Cllr Hannah Dalton (Deputy Chair) | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council |
| Cllr Philip Evans JP | Conwy County Borough Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Jo Beavis | Braintree District Council |
| Cllr Helen-Ann Smith | Ashfield District Council |

LGA Safer & Stronger Communities Board Attendance 2019-2020

| Councillors | 2/9/19 | 12/11/19 | 13/01/20 | 16/03/20 |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|----------|----------|
| Conservative Group | | | | |
| Katrina Wood | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Jason Ablewhite | No | No | N/a | N/A |
| Eric Allen | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Mohan Iyengar | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Andrew Joy | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| John Pennington | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Dave Stewart | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Lois Samuel | N/a | N/a | Yes | Yes |
| Labour Group | | | | |
| Simon Blackburn | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Kate Haigh | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Alan Rhodes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Jim Beall | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| James Dawson | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| Farah Hussain | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Claudia Webbe | Yes | No | N/a | N/A |
| Johnson Situ | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes |
| Lib Dem Group | | | | |
| Bridget Smith | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Jeremy Hilton | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Independent | | | | |
| Hannah Dalton | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Philip Evans JP | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| Substitutes/Observers | | | | |
| Daniel Francis | | Yes | Yes | |
| Jo Beavis | | Yes | Yes | |
| Lois Samuel | Yes | Yes | N/a | N/A |
| James Gartside | Yes | | | |
| Richard Auger | | | Yes | |
| Clive Johnson | | | Yes | |
| Tim Roca | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Agenda

Safer & Stronger Communities Board

Monday 15 June 2020

11.00 am

| Item | Page |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest | |
| 2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 March 2020 | 1 - 8 |
| CONFIDENTIAL ITEM FOR DISCUSSION | |
| 3. Prevent regional delivery - Presentation by Chris Williams and Sam Howe, Home Office | 9 - 14 |
| NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION | |
| 4. COVID-19 emergency: Safer and Stronger Communities team update | 15 - 26 |
| 5. Impact of Covid-19 on Bereavement Services | 27 - 32 |
| 6. Building safety update | 33 - 42 |
| 7. End of year report and future Board priorities for 2020/21 | 43 - 54 |
| ITEMS FOR NOTING | |
| 8. Safer and Stronger Communities Board update | 55 - 58 |

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday, 17 September 2020, 11.00 am, venue tbc.

Note of last Safer & Stronger Communities Board meeting

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Title: | Safer & Stronger Communities Board |
| Date: | Monday 16 March 2020 |
| Venue: | Victoria Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ |

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

| Item | Decisions and actions |
|------|-----------------------|
|------|-----------------------|

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest |
|----------|--|

Apologies were received from Cllr Katrina Wood, Cllr Mohan Iyengar, Cllr Richard Auger, Cllr Tim Roca and Cllr James Gartside.

There were no declarations of interest.

| | |
|----------|----------------------------------|
| 2 | Notes of previous meeting |
|----------|----------------------------------|

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2020 were agreed.

| | |
|----------|--|
| 3 | British Red Cross and National Emergencies Trust: building community resilience and working with the voluntary sector |
|----------|--|

The Chair welcomed Anna Garrod and Anna Lewis from the British Red Cross (BRC) to the meeting and asked them to update the Board on their work.

Anna said that with the Covid-19 crisis escalating, now was a very opportune time for her to be speaking to the Board about the BRC's work.

Anna explained that the BRC's role was to offer practical and emotional support to communities in a crisis situation including people, equipment, space and resources. She said that BRC responded to a crisis every four hours across the UK and explained how BRC and the wider Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) worked with statutory agencies through Local Resilience Forums (LRF).

Anna then went on to talk about the report 'People Power in Emergencies' that BRC published in late 2019 calling for better collaboration between LRFs and the VCS. She gave several examples from the report of where joined up working was not as effective as it could be including the fact that just 30 per cent of local resilience plans defined vulnerable people. She added that short term needs were often prioritised over longer term

support in plans.

Anna said that they were calling for the role of the VCS to be enshrined within civil contingencies legislation, and for more of a focus on human-centred guidance for those involved in responding to emergencies.

Anna then went on to talk about the new VCS Emergencies Partnership, chaired by BRC, which had been set up to address some of the criticism set out in a Charities Commission report on crisis responses. In particular, this called for better co-ordination of national fundraising and supporting learning from national emergencies during and after the recovery phase.

Following Anna's presentation, Members raised the following points and questions:

- Surprise was expressed at the 30 per cent figure of LRFs that defined vulnerability. Were any tools available to help them identify vulnerable groups? Anna said that they could talk to LRF chairs to see how guidance could best be circulated to facilitate this.
- Where did Maslow's hierarchy of needs fit into BRCs work? Anna said that these came before anything else; in a response situation they always ensured that people had basic necessities such as shelter, food and water.
- Did the Councils for Voluntary Services work with BRC? Anna said that they were part of the VCS Emergencies Partnership but she would go back and check just how involved they were.
- It was suggested that the response to Covid-19 would be seriously hampered by the necessity to practice social distancing and to keep away from vulnerable people. Anna said that they were looking at this and keeping it under review but social distancing didn't mean no social or other contact.
- It was stated that greater clarification of the role of councillors as community leaders in crisis situations would be helpful.
- Was the LGA involved in the new Emergencies Partnership? Anna said that they weren't at this stage but it would be helpful to have them around the table.

The Chair thanked Anna for her presentation and for answering members' questions.

The Chair then asked John Herriman from the National Emergencies Trust (NET) to give his presentation.

John explained that the NET had been set up in November 2019 in response to the Charities Commission recommendation that coordination of national appeals, fundraising and distribution needed to be improved following emergency incidents. He said that it was modelled on the Disasters and Emergencies Committee but would be for national incidents only.

John talked about the governance of the NET and that, although it launched in England, they were also able to operate in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

John explained NET activation criteria for launching an appeal - sufficient scale and urgency; unmet need; public support; and whether it felt like the 'right thing to do'. He then described the operating model and emergency response process they had established in the event of having to act in a crisis situation.

Finally, John said that NET were beginning to think about how an appeal for the Covid-19 situation might work and explained the key roles of the UK Community Foundations Network and Local Resilience Forums. He said that the role of local voluntary groups in identifying the most vulnerable people was also crucial and that NET would act as an enabler to get funding to those organisations.

Following John's presentation, Members raised the following points and questions:

- Making best use of the large number of willing volunteers that were coming forward was considered to be a challenge.
- Support needed to be provided to those who were supporting the emergency relief effort. It was considered vital that these people remained fit and healthy.
- Providing support to non-statutory agencies on the ground was considered to be key to an effective response to the crisis. Where unmet need was identified it was necessary to ensure help and resources got to the right place.
- Following the advice of experts and sticking to it was the only way to effectively tackle the crisis. If people didn't follow advice, the strategy would inevitably fail. Therefore, there needed to be strong leadership.
- The economic damage caused by the Coronavirus crisis could impact on the ability of NET to raise money. John agreed that people's ability to support an appeal may reduce over time, in which case the Government would have to step in to support the community and voluntary sector in order to take pressure off the NHS and social care providers.

The Chair thanked John for his presentation.

Decision

The Board noted the report and presentations.

4 Maritime and Coastguard Agency proposals on responsibilities for beach safety and update from the National Water Safety Forum

The Chair welcomed David Walker, Head of leisure safety policy at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and Dominic Watkins from DWF Law LLP to the meeting.

David gave Board members an update on the work of the National Water Safety Forum (NWSF). He explained that the Forum was a network of over 100 expert members whose goal was to prevent accidental drowning. The Forum's UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26 had a goal of

reducing accidental fatalities by 50 per cent by 2026 and reducing risks amongst key groups and communities. He said that in 2018 there were 263 accidental deaths in water and 220 suicides and added that the trend in accidental deaths was steadily decreasing whereas suicides were on the increase.

David then explained how the Forum was intending to align their activities and work with the LGA to try and reduce the number of deaths in local areas. This included:

- Coordinating a response to the Camber Sands tragedy
- Using a new national shared incident system
- Creating a single national set of water safety messages
- Increasing focus on suicide prevention plans
- Providing support for local authorities and partnerships to introduce a risk-based water safety strategy.
- Disseminating best practice through the LGA's water safety toolkit.

Dominic Watkins introduced his review of legal responsibilities for water safety, a piece of work that he was commissioned to do by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) following the inquest into the deaths at Camber Sands in 2016.

The intention of the review was to provide clarity on who has legal responsibility for ensuring water safety on our coastline. As part of the review Dominic looked at existing legislation and spoke to key stakeholders including the RNLI, the MCA, the LGA, RoSPA, various coastal local authorities and members of the NWSF.

Whilst the findings of the review have not been published, Dominic outlined some of the key recommendations. Including that; in the short term guidance for managing beach safety should be updated and consolidated; in the medium term that a new legal duty should be created to ensure beach safety and duties of the HM Coastguard be and; consideration to be given to centralisation of funding and/or delivery of beach lifeguarding duty.

Dominic said that in his view, rather than just clarifying existing guidance or extending local authority by-laws and existing legislation, the most effective way of improving beach safety would be to introduce a specific piece of new legislation. He then went on to describe what this could look like and stressed that it should be risk-based and not create disproportionate or unsustainable duties on authorities.

Following David and Dominic's presentations, members raised the following points:

- Where did tidal estuaries, with scheduled main rivers, fit into this? Dominic said that the same issues applied as to beaches but that this was outside the scope of his review.
- It was suggested that there needed to be a two-pronged approach incorporating risk assessment and prevention, rather than just implementing reactive measures in the aftermath of serious incidents. In this context it was questioned how best to get local authority buy-in to the process.

- Concern was raised about introducing new legislation which could result in a new claims culture and undermine individual social responsibility.

The Chair thanked David and Dominic for their presentations.

Decision

Board members noted the report and presentations.

5 COVID-19

The Chair asked Mark Norris to introduce the Covid-19 update and asked Board members to focus on how the LGA could help and what they could be doing as community leaders.

Mark updated members on the latest infection figures and said that they were expecting a 40 per cent daily increase in cases over the next few weeks which would inevitably lead to a significant increase in hospitalisations.

Mark explained that the Government's focus was now on supporting the most vulnerable members of society – i.e. those aged over 70 and with underlying health conditions. He said that the LGA was now working with Government, councils and the community and voluntary sector to ensure that these vulnerable people could be supported in terms of food, shelter, medicines and mental well-being for potentially a period of 3-4 months.

Mark said that the LGA was keeping a log of issues raised by local authorities. Many councils were concerned about the extra financial resources they were going to need to support vulnerable residents through the crisis. He said that the Government had made £5 billion available to the NHS and other services in the first instance but they had also made it clear that more would be made available to councils as and when needed.

Mark said that they were in regular contact with Ministers and there was a council leaders' call with the Secretary of State following this meeting, in addition to a call with the Prime Minister later in the week.

Mark finished by saying that if members had any issues or questions around Covid-19 to contact him or Ellie Greenwood in the first instance. He added that the LGA was currently re-prioritising its workstreams in the light of Covid-19 and that some areas of work would now unfortunately be receiving less attention, particularly if staff became ill and had to self-isolate.

Following Mark's introduction, members raised the following points:

- Would LGA Board meetings still be going ahead? Mark said that this was still to be determined but it was likely that they would need to either be postponed or held remotely for a period of time.
- What could be done to tackle fake news around Covid-19 on social media?

- A significant number of residents couldn't read English – how would information be relayed to them?
- How could people, who might be tempted to visit elderly relatives during the lockdown, be prevented from doing so?
- Councils should look at best practice from community / mutual aid groups and how councils interact with them.
- This should not be turned into a political issue. Councils should share data and information with elected members from all parties.
- There would be a need to relax planning rules in terms of the statutory time limits otherwise councils could be open to appeals from developers for non-determination.
- The issue of older and vulnerable people being scammed by people offering assistance was raised and what local authorities could do to stop it.
- Local authorities needed to get support in place for businesses who would be struggling in the current situation.
- The issue of continuing to uphold local democracy was raised. It was likely that many elected members would have to self-isolate or may catch the virus itself. This in turn might leave vacancies in wards and put additional pressure on those members who remained fit and healthy.
- The importance and responsibility of elected members providing authentic information to residents was emphasised. It was suggested that the LGA cascade daily briefings to all councillors with the latest information, so that all councillors are sighted on the current position.
- Members suggested that the above 70 age cut off was too simplistic as some over 70s were in good health and less vulnerable than many under 70s.
- There needed to be more clarity from Government and the LGA on the specific roles of councils and councillors during the pandemic. It was suggested that some councils and other organisations were not following advice and were going off on a tangent. For example, some councils were cancelling events, ward surgeries etc. whilst others were still going ahead.

Ellie noted that it had been agreed that the LGA would develop specific guidance for councillors on their role in responding to the Covid-19 emergency. Mark thanked members for their contributions and said that he would add their points to the issues log.

Decision

Board members noted the update.

6 Building safety update

The Chair asked Mark Norris to introduce the update.

Mark said that since the report had been written, the Chancellor had announced an additional £1 billion for the remediation of flammable

cladding and to help local authorities collect data on buildings in their area. Mark said that civil servants were currently drawing up the detail but that the distribution of the money was likely to be modelled on the existing ACM cladding fund.

In relation to the data collection exercise, Mark said that returns were currently running at around 30 per cent but there was likely to be an extension for councils with large numbers of buildings in their areas.

Mark informed members that the Government was keen for the Joint Inspection Team to ramp up its work but this would need to be reviewed in the light of Covid-19.

Finally, Mark said that the Fire Safety Bill was due to be laid before Parliament later in March but that this may also need to be reviewed.

Members expressed concern that the outsourcing of the building control function by councils had undermined consistency in standards and that councils no longer had control of the building safety process. Mark said that a key part of the new Building Safety Bill would be the establishment of a new regulator which would provide oversight of issues such as building control.

Decision

Board members noted the update.

7 Update Paper

The Chair asked Mark to introduce the update.

Mark said that, in view of the time, he would just take questions.

- Members thanked Rachel Phelps and the team for delivering an excellent knife-crime conference and also Ellie Greenwood and Rebecca Johnson for the Licensing Leadership Essentials course.
- The Board's champion for tackling modern slavery, Councillor Alan Rhodes, said that he was due to meet with the Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton, following the Board meeting.
- The Chair and other members expressed concern that the Serious Violence Task Force, chaired by the Home Secretary, hadn't met for 14 months.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week at the end of March was flagged up to members.

Decision

Board members noted the update.

Appendix A -Attendance

| Position/Role | Councillor | Authority |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Chair | Cllr Simon Blackburn | Blackpool Council |
| Vice-Chairman | | |
| Deputy-chair | Cllr Bridget Smith Cllr Hannah Dalton | South Cambridgeshire District Council Epsom and Ewell Borough Council |
| Members | Cllr Eric Allen Cllr Andrew Joy Cllr John Pennington Cllr Dave Stewart Cllr Lois Samuel Cllr Kate Haigh Cllr Alan Rhodes Cllr Jim Beall Cllr James Dawson Cllr Farah Hussain Cllr Johnson Situ Cllr Jeremy Hilton Cllr Philip Evans JP | London Borough of Sutton Hampshire County Council Bradford Metropolitan District Council Isle of Wight Council West Devon Borough Council Gloucester City Council Nottinghamshire County Council Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Erewash Borough Council Redbridge London Borough Council Southwark Council Gloucestershire County Council Conwy County Borough Council |
| Apologies from full Board members | Cllr Katrina Wood Cllr Mohan Iyengar | Wycombe District Council Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council |
| In Attendance | Anna Garrod Anna Lewis David Walker Dominic Watkins John Herriman | British Red Cross British Red Cross RoSPA DWF Law LLP National Emergencies Trust |

Document is Restricted



COVID-19 emergency: Safer and Stronger Communities team update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper updates the Board on the activity undertaken by the Safer and Stronger Communities team to support the LGA's response to the COVID-19 emergency since the Board's last meeting in mid-March.

Recommendation

That the Board note work to date and provide direction on any future work.

Actions

Officers to take forward as directed.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 07798 534781
Email: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

COVID-19 emergency: Safer and Stronger Communities team update

Background

1. Since the last meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, the focus of the team's work has shifted to substantially focus on supporting the LGA's COVID-19 emergency response work. While some areas of work, specifically around building safety, have been broadly maintained in line with existing plans, the focus of all other SSC workstreams has shifted to respond to the implications of the COVID-19 emergency. Alongside this, several the team have been involved in supporting other LGA COVID-19 workstreams in areas that fall outside the remit of the Board.
2. The COVID-19 emergency has led to some scheduled events being postponed and means that some planned areas of work have been delayed: these changes are summarised in the end of year report and future Board priorities paper. This paper updates the Board on the team's COVID-19 work to date and looks ahead to our expected future work in the coming weeks and months.

Issues

3. The Board has policy responsibility for a number of areas that are critically important to any emergency response (notably civil resilience and emergency planning) and which sadly have been highly relevant to the COVID-19 response (specifically mortality management). However, as members will be aware, no council service or LGA policy area has been untouched by the response, and there have been implications for all of the team's core work areas.

Emergency planning / Local Resilience Forums

4. Ironically, the Board meeting on 16 March, as the COVID-19 crisis was clearly escalating, provided a timely opportunity for the Board to consider our work programme on resilience issues, including hearing from the British Red Cross and National Emergencies Trust about their work in emergency responses. Following the meeting, officers moved quickly to develop a COVID-19 specific version of our councillor guide to civil emergencies. This was published within a few days of the Board meeting, and was extremely well received by councillors and officers as guidance on the role that members could play in the response (it is currently the second most viewed LGA publication). We have subsequently followed that up with guidance for councillors on civil emergency structures, which is being published alongside the LGA leadership team's new guide for leaders and cabinet members.

5. The team has also taken the lead role on national engagement with civil resilience structures, notably engaging with MHCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division, national structures for Local Resilience Forum (LRF) discussions, and participating in a multi-agency COVID-19 foresight working group.

Shielding structures and supporting vulnerable people

6. With LRFs having originally been tasked with establishing structures to support the Government's shielding programme, designed to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) to COVID-19, members of the team have also been working as part of the LGA's supporting vulnerable people workstream. This has accounted for a significant amount of LGA capacity and, from within the SSC team, of both the Principal and one of the Senior Policy Advisers' time in particular, reflecting ongoing issues with how the centrally established framework operates at a local level.
7. There are a number of issues that the supporting vulnerable team continue to focus on, including:
 - 7.1. ongoing issues with data flows from the shielding team to local councils in relation to the CEV cohort and those among them whom the Government has successfully contacted to confirm their support needs
 - 7.2. an increasing interest within Government of the support needs and potential food vulnerability of groups who are not CEV but may have challenges in accessing food despite being able to afford it, and the mechanisms available to support this group
 - 7.3. recognising the needs of a much wider group of people who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing food poverty and financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.
8. Our work on these issues has been based upon a number of key principles, in particular: highlighting that councils have already put in place a wide range of measures locally to support people who are vulnerable as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, regardless of whether they are in the CEV shielded cohort or vulnerable for other reasons; the need for a proportionate approach to data gathering from and monitoring of councils, to reduce the impact of this on councils focusing on delivering local support mechanisms; understanding the significant financial impacts on councils arising from the support mechanisms put in place linked to COVID-19.
9. A related issue which the team is now focusing on is the mechanism for supporting vulnerable people who may be required to self-isolate as a result of the NHS Test and Trace system, in particular ensuring that this is linked into local structures and that a separate, centrally led architecture is not developed in this space.

Death management

10. The team has been working at pace to understand the issues affecting the death management process during the pandemic and to support local communities to cope with increased numbers of deaths, in particular with the establishment of temporary mortuary space across the country. At the same time, we have been engaging with central government to ensure that national guidance preserves local discretion and that central government is aware of the challenges, both practical and financial, that this work presents to local authorities.
11. We have responded quickly and effectively to a range of emerging issues. We have worked with trade bodies to agree satisfactory responses to councils concerned about operating crematoria without more flexibility on remote operation or qualifications of staff, and with government to streamline the death registration process and to clarify whether cemeteries and crematoria grounds can remain open under current regulations.
12. The LGA has been working with central government to ensure they consider the concerns of local authorities across all its COVID-19 workstreams. On this workstream, that has included working with MHCLG to influence guidance on the operation of Schedule 28 of the Coronavirus Act (which created new powers relating to the death management process), persuading them to involve a wider group of practitioners to ensure the effectiveness of the guidance. Another key concern that we have consistently raised with both MHCLG and Public Health England is the need for them to emphasise that funerals should be conducted promptly and to have a reduced number of mourners in attendance to aid social distancing.
13. We continue to liaise with the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat through regular meetings where we highlight ongoing issues, including the struggle to access appropriate PPE for those involved in the death management process and ensuring that local government are properly recompensated for the financial commitments they have made to put additional storage capacity in place. As we move through the next phase into some form of recovery, we will need to continue to engage with government on issues such as reactivating birth and marriage registration in a manageable way with social distancing; the potential for increased funeral poverty; social distancing at funerals and in places of remembrance; long-term cemetery planning and supporting the resilience of funeral directors.
14. We have established a Bereavement Services Sounding Group and a Registrars and Coroner Managers Sounding Group which have helped us to understand local impacts as they emerge. We will continue to use these groups as we progress through the recovery stage to test government assumptions and inform our lobbying positions as we go forward.

Licensing and regulation

15. Business closures under new coronavirus legislation and restrictions on peoples' movement have had a significant impact on the licensed sector. Pubs and clubs have been forced to close, demand for taxis has reduced considerably and businesses such as kennels have seen business largely disappear as pet owners stay at home.
16. In response to this, councils have been receiving a large number of requests from licensees, both for advice about how they should be operating their businesses in a safe and legal way where they can continue to open, and for support at a time where normal operations have been disrupted and the viability of some businesses has been brought into question. Councils licensing teams have also had significant challenges to contend with as both officers and Members work through how to practically manage the administration of licences and decision making. We have been supporting a large number of our members on this by answering queries, signposting to advice and raising issues with relevant government departments.
17. The LGA has sought clarity from the Government on the approach that councils should be taking on various issues both to provide a level of assurance and to support consistency across the country. While Government has not provided detailed responses to many of the issues arising, the broad steer is to encourage councils to take a pragmatic approach where there is discretion to do so. Kit Malthouse MP [wrote to chairs of licensing committees](#) to endorse this approach and it is one that the LGA has also supported.
18. In April, the LGA developed [practical guidance](#) for councils on approaches to managing licensing during the pandemic, reflecting practices and approaches councils were already using. The guide sets out some key principles as well as picking up on issues around licence fees, procedures and hearings and non-compliance. The guidance, alongside other relevant information related to licensing is hosted on a the LGAs [covid-19 hub](#). We have also issued advice notes for councils on mobile caterers and the use of temporary screens in taxis which are hosted on a the LGAs COVID-19 hub, alongside other relevant information related to licensing is.
19. Beyond licensing, trading standards and environmental health officers have been responsible for enforcing the premises side of the [health protection coronavirus regulations](#) which made provision for a number of public health measures to be taken to reduce the public health risks posed by the spread of COVID-19. These regulations have been overseen by the Office for Product Safety and Standards, and have generally been implemented very smoothly: figures suggest councils have issued a reasonably low level of prohibition notices and have for the most part focused on providing advice and guidance to businesses. Trickier issues for councils to judge have included premises that sell goods that may be deemed essential (eg food) and non-essential, and how these

should be managed, and certain types of businesses that in some cases do not sit neatly within the original regulations, such as garden centres and hand car washes.

20. We have highlighted to Government the significant demands and expectations on environmental health services in particular, given the implications of social distancing measures on the implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which councils enforce in a number of local premises; the potential diversion of resources to support local contact tracing, and the resumption of business as usual activity (eg food safety) as the economy begins to reopen. The LGA and councils are emphasising the need for both additional resources, and also clarity about prioritisation of activity.
21. We have also engaged with the Government, National Police Chiefs Council and ACRO Criminal Records Office regarding the handling of the fixed penalty notices that the police can issue in enforcing the stay at home regulations as they relate to individuals. The LGA has been working with the Home Office and ACRO to ensure the payments of these fines is distributed to councils (upper tier, as designated by the regulations).
22. In line with the regulations, ACRO will transfer the payments they receive to the respective, appropriate local authority where each fine is issued. Due to the way the regulations have been drafted this will be to 'tier one' authorities – unitary authorities, metropolitan districts, London boroughs and county councils. [Details of the exact information required is including in this](#) letter and there is also a [flyer which provides information on ACRO's involvement in this process](#).

Domestic Abuse

23. There has been widespread recognition of the fact that the coronavirus pandemic and stay at home measures could have serious implications for victims of domestic abuse victims, who would face greater exposure to those perpetrating the crime. It was understood the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic could exacerbate and escalate domestic abuse, given that this has been a clear trend in other parts of the world. In light of this, the LGA is speaking regularly with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the Government and the domestic abuse sector to ensure we are doing all we can to tackle domestic abuse, and the Commissioner has written an [article](#) on this for First magazine.
24. The LGA has published a [guide for councils on tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). The guide includes resources to help councils support domestic abuse victims and tackle perpetrators' abusive behaviour. The guide has been downloaded over 2,000 times and is being regularly updated with the latest policy and funding announcements.
25. On **funding**, in May 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), announced [£76 million in extra funding to support survivors of domestic abuse](#)

and sexual violence, vulnerable children and their families, and victims of modern slavery. This is being supported as part of a £750m fund to support the charity sector in response to coronavirus. MHCLG also announced that domestic abuse survivors will automatically qualify for priority need under the council duty to relieve homelessness: the follows the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Luke Hall MP, writing [to all local authorities to ask them to work closely with the domestic abuse services](#) in their area, providing support where necessary in order to protect victims, for example by providing crisis funding to safe accommodation services. [Our LGA media response promoted the tireless work councils are undertaking](#) to protect and help those who are most vulnerable during this pandemic.

26. In April 2020, the Home Office [announced £3.1 million will go to specialist services for children who have both been directly and indirectly affected by domestic abuse](#). The new funding will be split between local authorities, children's charities and Police and Crime Commissioners across England and Wales. The Home Secretary has also previously [announced](#) that the Home Office is working with charities and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to provide an additional £2 million to immediately bolster domestic abuse helplines and online support.
27. The LGA gave [written evidence](#) covering domestic abuse to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry which considered Home Office preparedness for Covid-19 (Coronavirus). Our concerns about the fall in children's social care referrals are featured in the Committee's [final report](#). The LGA also raised concerns about support for domestic abuse victims in our written evidence submission to the Women and Equalities Committee, as part of their inquiry on Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the impact on people with protected characteristics.

Early release of prisoners

28. The team has worked with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service on proposals to enable the early release of prisoners nearing the end of their sentences, as part of a suite of measures to reduce the risk of infection within the prison estate. This has been an issue of significant interest for councils, who were concerned that prisoners would be released with no accommodation to go to, particularly towards the end of the week; however, the MoJ confirmed that only prisoners who have suitable accommodation and whose healthcare needs (including COVID-related ones) can be safely managed on release are eligible for both schemes.
29. Temporary restrictions were put in place to minimise movements between prisons and reduce face-to-face probation meetings to avoid offenders and staff becoming infected with coronavirus. These measures included the early release of low-risk offenders, temporary expansion of the prison estate, and work to reduce the number of those held on remand. Consideration is now being given to how these restrictions can be cautiously rolled back over the coming weeks and months. The Ministry of Justice has announced

this will happen within national frameworks for [prisons](#) and [probation](#). The LGA continues to work with the Government and the HM Prisons and Probation Service on this important issue.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

30. The LGA has been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise councils' concerns about unauthorised encampments. The Minister sent a [letter](#) to councils highlighting the importance of supporting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is available on our LGA coronavirus hub. The LGA will continue to liaise with the Government and councils about support for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and responding to unauthorised encampments.

Counter-extremism and community cohesion

31. We have seen the emergence of a number of extremism issues related to COVID-19. In the early stage of the pandemic in the UK, this included reports of hate incidents related to the outbreak, mainly targeted at Chinese (or other East Asian) communities. While face-to-face incidents inevitably reduced as lockdown measures were introduced, there are concerns that the pandemic has been used to fuel extremist narratives (particularly on the far right), with an increased focus on COVID themes online, and that there is the potential for physical incidents to increase as lockdown measures are eased. Some of this online activity remains focussed on Chinese communities, but there has also been increased targeting of Muslim communities in particular; examples have included the circulation of (fake) videos or memes claiming to show Mosques still open alongside claims that authorities are not taking action for fear of being labelled as racist. Several councils have reported concerns about simmering community tensions and how this will play out as the country emerges from lockdown.
32. A number of conspiracy theories have been propagated relating to the pandemic, which have seen mainstream circulation/advocacy in an unprecedented way. Examples include theories relating to the origins of the virus, often with anti-Semitic/anti-elite undertones, and blaming the 5G network for either causing the virus, helping it to spread, or lowering immunity to it. The latter has seen over 70 attacks on 5G masts (or what are perceived to be 5G masts) across the country, with engineers also receiving threats of violence.
33. While anti-lockdown protests have not seen widespread support so far, it is possible that any future returns to stricter lockdown measures may lead to protests attracting more mainstream backing.
34. In the longer-term, it is likely that the anticipated severe economic downturn will further exacerbate 'blaming' and 'othering' narratives; economic decline and rising inequality (or perceptions of these) have traditionally provided fertile territory for extremists.

35. We have been working with colleagues at the SIGCE to explore these themes, encouraging councils to share their experiences and challenges through the SIGCE's Knowledge Hub, and to share resources and research into emerging issues. We held an initial SIGCE roundtable with council officers at the end of April to discuss emerging issues and what support councils might need in response, and a further roundtable is planned this month. We are also proceeding with plans to run a webinar for local authorities focussed on online extremism.
36. In the Prevent space, there have been some concerns about increased risks from radicalisation during lockdown; with schools largely closed over recent weeks, Prevent referrals have decreased significantly and there are fears those at risk may be being missed. We have been promoting a recent campaign from Counter-Terrorism police to help encourage increased community reporting and have been discussing how to address this further with Home Office officials.
37. We have also been discussing wider cohesion issues with MHCLG colleagues and are exploring the potential for some further work to capture and disseminate positive examples of community cohesion which have emerged during the pandemic response, as well as help support the sector to respond to cohesion challenges across a variety of themes which are likely to emerge in the coming months.

Beach safety

38. Councils representing coastal areas have had to deal with large numbers of people descending on their areas over recent weekends since restrictions were partially lifted and good weather has continued. This has been a real issue for those councils responsible for beach safety as the RNLI suspended lifeguard provision this year due to COVID-19 and only rolled out a small handful of lifeguards at beaches in late May whilst the rest of the lifeguard provision remains suspended. Over the late May bank holiday two people drowned at a beach in Cornwall and the following weekend saw three people airlifted to hospital after jumping off cliffs in Dorset.
39. The LGA has been lobbying government to provide better national messaging about water safety which acknowledges that people going to beaches need to behave responsibly. We have called for guidance that provides advice on how councils can address any legal liabilities they might face including how they might revise risk assessments that may have previously focused on the provision of lifeguards given that this service may not be available this summer. We have also called for advice from government on whether for example councils should be opening facilities such as toilets, or whether that encourages visitors and increases the risk of spreading infection.

Looking ahead to stabilisation and recovery

40. Given our role on resilience, the team are currently working closely with the LGA's COVID-19 programme management office to help scope out the organisation's work to support councils as local places begin the likely slow process of moving through a period of stabilisation and recovery. As set out in the Board priorities paper, we expect a key theme to be developing a sector view on how emergency response structures have fared, and what amendments will be required to strengthen these for future responses.
41. However the country continues to progress out of the current lockdown, there will be significant implications for councils (and by extension their communities) in terms of the transition from current service levels and priorities to some form of business as usual (BAU) working and services, and from existing emergency response structures into normal structures and geographies.
42. Within the team, we have already begun thinking about this. On licensing, issues, we have had some early discussions with the Home Office about practical considerations around enforcement to inform discussions about the government's exit strategy. We have been clear that re-opening could present an enforcement challenge and that councils and businesses will need clear guidance on how this can be managed. The LGA, alongside the Greater London Authority and National Police Chiefs Council, is taking part in discussions with a group of hospitality sector experts which has been convened to offer advice to government on plans to re-open pubs, bars and restaurants.
43. On safer communities issues, whilst there are signs that knife crime and serious violence in a public space has decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, the police have reported that county lines networks have adopted new models to continue to sell and distribute drugs. For example, using taxis more frequently to transport drugs and some using food delivery outfits to disguise their activity.
44. There have also been reports from community safety and public health teams that the purity of drugs being sold has diminished, as international supplies are hampered. There are concerns about the decrease in children's social care referrals and safeguarding concerns about vulnerable children at risk of serious violent crime. Certainly, as we look towards the recovery period, the issue of county lines and serious violent crime will become an increasing priority for all councils and their partners.
45. Serious violence in a public space may be lower, but unfortunately reports of domestic abuse and calls for domestic abuse support are significantly higher. The LGA guide on domestic abuse highlights a number of these concerns and the resources available to councils to help address the issue locally. It will be important that domestic abuse support services are in place and adequately funded to provide help to victims as the lockdown measures are lifted, as well as ensuring there are the necessary interventions and programmes that perpetrators can access to help change their behaviour. It is



particularly timely that the Domestic Abuse Bill is progressing through Parliament, which we hope will seek to address some of these key issues.

Financial Implications

46. The work outlined above has been undertaken within normal team resources.

Next steps

47. Although the LGA is currently taking steps to restore a more normal rhythm of meetings and work patterns it is clear that, like our members, COVID-19 will dominate our work for the foreseeable future. SSCB workstreams are likely to continue to focus on the implications of the pandemic over the coming weeks, although where possible officers will look to try to resume areas of work that were being planned before the emergency, recognising that some of this work may be fundamentally altered by the impact of the virus.



Impact of Covid-19 on Bereavement Services

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The paper outlines the LGA's work on death management during the Coronavirus response.

Recommendation

That the Board consider the next steps outlined in this paper, provide comments and highlight if there are any other activities that the LGA should take forwards.

Action

Officers to take forward as directed.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3321
Email: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

Impact of Covid-19 on Bereavement Services

Background

1. The LGA has been working on behalf of councils to provide support and highlight their concerns to Government throughout the Coronavirus response. Death management has been one of the key workstreams for the organisation and our work has consisted of three key activities:
 - 1.1. Responding to concerns or issues raised with us by councils
 - 1.2. Liaising and engaging with Government to represent councils' views and highlight issues
 - 1.3. Producing resources for councils to help respond at a local level.
2. We are now starting to move into the recovery phase of the coronavirus response, though there are some concerns regarding a second wave and the implications for death management. Our work has covered body storage issues, funerals, cemeteries, crematoria and registration services. These services have seen a number of changes to their working practices as a result of coronavirus.
3. We held two workshops on the lessons learned from the pandemic, one with registrars and one with those responsible for wider death management. Those workshops have helped to inform the next steps that this paper outlines for Member's comments. We are proposing that the Board writes to MHCLG to outline the key points that have been highlighted with the LGA on death management issues.

The coronavirus response

4. The coronavirus response took in a wide number of issues on bereavement services. We received over 300 issues related to bereavement services during the pandemic and the key issues we have dealt with during the outbreak are outlined in paragraphs 7 to 15.
5. To help inform our work we established a Bereavement Services Sounding Group and a Registrars and Coroner Managers Sounding Group which have helped us to understand local impacts as they emerge.
6. It is clear that some of these issues will have a long-term impact on councils, especially the financial impact of coronavirus.
7. **Body storage capacity:** Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) worked to increase temporary body storage capacity. Many councils have incurred significant costs on behalf of their LRFs in order to provide the capacity that Government figures suggested would be

necessary. We emphasised to Government the importance of ensuring that councils are recompensed for this early action to ensure that body storage was in place. Councils are now making decisions on the future of that capacity and need certainty on funding.

8. **Section 58 and Schedule 28 of the Coronavirus Act 2020:** we worked with Government as they produced statutory guidance on how Schedule 28 of the Coronavirus Act (dealing with local death management) should operate. Schedule 28 introduced new powers allowing local or national government to direct the transportation, storage and disposal of the deceased if capacity is exceeded locally or nationally. We brought together a group of officers from around the country to help Government turn outline thoughts into a practical set of requirements, that ensured that local authorities would be at the centre of any decisions about whether and how the powers to direct businesses and local authorities would be operated.
9. **Cemeteries:** we encouraged Government to amend regulations to provide clarity on whether or not cemeteries could be kept open. The original regulations were causing confusion across the country. The Government was initially not convinced that there was an issue with the regulations, however, Government's view changed to providing clarification (along with a statement from the Secretary of State that they should be open), and then finally to an amendment to the regulations. This required consistent lobbying over more than two weeks.
10. **Funerals:** we worked to persuade government to strengthen guidance around delaying funerals and to clarify their position on funeral attendance. This led to Public Health England publishing much needed guidance on managing funerals during the pandemic and emphasising the importance of social distancing at funerals. We have continued to emphasise the importance of local decisions on appropriate social distancing for funerals, based on the capacity at individual crematoria chapels.
11. **Personal protective equipment (PPE) and body bags:** as in other areas there were shortages of PPE for those dealing with the deceased. We highlighted these issues with government.
12. **Registrars:** registrars services were changed significantly by the Coronavirus Act 2020, with the electronic sharing of forms between doctors, registrars and burial and cremation services and the ability to do death registrations over the telephone. Registrars services stopped taking notices of marriage, conducting wedding services and birth registrations as well as all other registration activities during the outbreak. The changes to make death registration easier with the electronic transfer of documents and telephone appointments had been well received by registrars. We have shared information with councils on registrars services, as well as providing MHCLG with information on how the registrar service was working during the pandemic.

13. **Crematoria technician's qualifications:** we worked with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematoria Management and the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities to agree responses to councils who were concerned about operating crematoria without more flexibility on remote operation or qualifications of staff. This is on our website as an FAQ.
14. **Modelling:** Many areas raised concerns about the lack of modelling from central Government to aid their planning at a local level. The LGA and others raised this issue with Government on a number of occasions. As we look at a second wave, a lack of modelling is still posing an issue for local areas. However, due to the difficulties posed by the large number of unknowns and variations as restrictions are eased, we do not expect this issue to be resolved easily.
15. **Funeral poverty:** there are some concerns that the coronavirus outbreak will lead to higher levels of funeral poverty and possibly public health funerals. The Department of Work and Pensions have made modifications to their processes to try and expedite the payment of the funeral expense's payments to claimants. Anecdotal evidence from councils suggests a mixed picture on the numbers of public health funerals councils are carrying out. We are continuing to monitor the situation.

Support to councils

16. Alongside our work in responding to issues raised with us with the Government we have provided bespoke support to councils through the enquiries line and Principal Advisors. We have also produced materials for the LGA's website to support councils in this work. The [LGA's coronavirus FAQs includes a section on death management](#), and we have created a new [death management webpage](#) and a [death management flowchart](#) which outlines the council processes that people go through after a loved one dies.

Recovery

17. As with other areas of work we are now looking at recovery and what the impact of a return to business as usual might look like following the coronavirus outbreak. We held two workshops with our sounding groups to determine what their lessons learned had been and if there were any particular concerns for their areas.

Registrars

18. Registrars noted several concerns with returning to business as usual, with the resumption of their wider registrar duties including, but not limited to, registering births, conducting wedding ceremonies and providing marriage notices:
 - 18.1. There was a significant backlog of births that needed to be registered. The Government have now outlined that these can begin again – taking into account public health guidance around social distancing.

- 18.2. Registrars discussed the positive impact that telephone registration had had for services and were interested in exploring how telephone registration and electronic sharing of information could be expanded. However, this would require primary legislation. Using secondary powers to enable pre-population of the birth certificate and partial telephone process would be the next best option. There is currently a pilot trialling video calling for birth registration.
- 18.3. There were concerns around the validity of existing notices of marriage and venue availability to carry out marriages in line with social distancing guidelines. It was also clear that public pressure on these services would increase. There have been recent media stories that the Government will introduce an easing of restrictions on indoor weddings – allowing up to 10 people to attend an indoor wedding from early July. There have also been reports of the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, will be creating legislation to permit outdoor weddings. This would be a significant change to the legislation, where this is currently not permitted except for Jews and Quakers. We are awaiting further information from the General Register Office on this work.

Death Management

19. Death management colleagues outlined concerns around a range of issues including:
- 19.1. The future of the temporary body storage facilities that had been put in place, especially the financing of those facilities. The investment made by some councils to procure temporary body storage facilities was significant, though there were sizeable variations across councils on how much had been spent. Areas are now considering what the next steps should for those facilities should be, and were taking steps to decommission this provision. Many areas now had a better understanding of what body storage capacity there was in local areas, for example through funeral directors, and would be considering how this storage could be utilised going forwards.
- 19.2. The impact of seasonal flu on this work area, and the potential for it to coincide with a second wave of infections was a particular concern to practitioners.
- 19.3. The number of Government departments involved in death management during the coronavirus response led to confusion. Practitioners stated that it would be helpful to have one Government Department that was responsible for all death management issues in any second wave to help provide clarity and a clear point of contact for all queries. They said that the provision of clear and timely guidance was key for councils and v needed to be given alongside announcements.
- 19.4. Social distancing will continue to have an impact on funerals for the foreseeable future, however there were concerns that is restrictions were reintroduced in particular areas or for limited periods, public support would be difficult to maintain.

Recent media reports have also highlighted that there will be an easing of restrictions on funeral numbers, though no further information has yet been released by the Government

Implications for Wales

20. There were some differences in the way that the death management process has worked in England and Wales, for example the provisions relating to funerals are different, most notably in England attendance is essentially limited to close family, whereas in Wales the determining factor is the number of people who can safely attend. The Welsh Government prescribed that this should be a matter for the council /service provider to determine, based on risk assessment of safe social distancing arrangements per premises. However, the Coronavirus Act changes to registration services applied in both countries.
21. The WLGA has been supporting councils in Wales on these issues. Regular meetings between officials; and weekly Local Authority Leaders meetings with a range of Welsh Parliament Ministers, have helped to develop policy, and regulatory provisions.
22. The WLGA believes this open dialogue will continue over the coming period when further easements of restrictions are considered, planned and announced in good time for the resumption of services.

Financial Implications

23. The work can be undertaken within current budgets.

Next steps

24. In order to support the lessons learned process for the Government, we are seeking members the Board's approval to write to MHCLG in order to highlight the important lessons learned that practitioners outlined during our workshops where we believe Government should take action.
25. We would welcome members' view on whether there are any other potential activities that we should consider. Other potential activities for members to consider would include:
 - 25.1. Officers to explore the extension of the digitisation of registration services further with the National Panel for Registration.
 - 25.2. Officers to collect good practice from councils on death management.



Building Safety update

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This report updates members on the LGA's building safety related work since its last meeting.

Recommendation

That members note and comment on the LGA's building safety related work.

Actions

Officers to incorporate members' views in the LGA's ongoing building safety related work.

Contact officer: Charles Loft
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7665 3874
Email: Charles.loft@local.gov.uk

Building Safety update

Background

1. Since the Board's last meeting the LGA has continued to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Home Office to support building safety reform and the remediation of dangerous buildings. Work on both fronts has been disrupted by Covid-19, the latter to a significant extent. Two significant developments have taken place in that a new minister Lord Stephen Greenhalgh has been appointed to a joint position in the Home Office and MHCLG to oversee fire and building safety; and the Fire Safety Bill has been published and has passed its second reading in Parliament.

Remediation

Progress

2. Progress continues to be made in carrying out remediation to the 154 social sector residential blocks with combinations of aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding and insulation that have been found not to meet the building regulation standards. The [statistics](#) published by MHCLG in April show that as of 30 April 2020, remediation has finished on 72 of these blocks. Of those which have not yet been remediated, work has started on 73 of these blocks and a further 9 have plans in place. Funding for the remediation of 139 of these 154 buildings is provided from the government's social sector ACM cladding remediation fund (launched on 16 May 2018 to help remediate social sector residential buildings) and one more is expected to apply. Remediation works for the remaining 14 buildings are being funded through a combination of existing funds and litigation action.
3. The same latest statistics from MHCLG show that remediation work has been completed on 28 private high-rise residential buildings with ACM. A further 182 buildings are yet to be remediated; of these, 49 have begun remediation, 90 have a plan in place, and 40 have plans in development. There is still 1 private high-rise residential building where no plan is in place. As at 31 March 2020, 94 buildings were in scope for the Private Sector Remediation Fund and 92 of them had submitted an application. The remaining two buildings are preparing an application - these had exceptional circumstances or had only recently been identified. Of the buildings not in scope for the Fund, the developer or freeholder committed to pay for remediation of 84 buildings and 23 were accepted under a warranty claim.
4. There are 15 buildings for which the cladding status is awaiting confirmation.



5. Remediation work has slowed to a significant extent since the introduction of measures to combat Covid-19. Apart from issues around whether work can be conducted safely, there are difficulties in workers reaching sites safely.
6. At the end of April MHCLG had figures for 97 of 124 sites. Of these 52 were paused, 14 had paused but were now working again and 31 had not paused (these figures exclude some sites where work was complete but waiting building control sign off).
7. The Government has appointed Dr David Hancock to review ACM remediation and Faithful & Gould, to provide additional programmed management capability. They will 'identify blockers and ... seek solutions to Covid-19 impacts, including on labour and supply, through engagement with individual remediation projects.' Dr Hancock leads the Government Construction Team and chairs the Government Construction Board for the Cabinet Office and Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

Fire Protection Board

8. As members will recall from the last Board meeting, the Home Office has established the Fire Protection Board, which has now completed a Building Risk Review exercise to establish the effectiveness of interim measures at buildings with ACM cladding and whether the relevant fire and rescue service (FRS) had plans in place to deal with a fire in the relevant buildings. All FRSs have now responded to this letter and a report will go to the Minister.
9. To support the work of the Board, £10m of funding has been made available, divided between central funding to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and individual fire and rescue services, in addition to funding announced in the budget to support protection.
10. The Board is developing a programme of work designed to increase the pace of inspection across all high-rise residential buildings, but the Minister's pledge to complete this by the end of 2021 is expected to be revised, given the difficulties posed by Covid 19. This programme will be launched in June.
11. It is worth noting that there has been at least one case where Covid 19-related concerns has led to the withdrawal of a waking watch. This is an ongoing issue.

Joint Inspection Team

12. As members will recall the LGA is hosting the Joint Inspection Team to support councils to use their enforcement powers under the Housing Act and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

13. The team has so far supported six local authorities to carry out inspections of buildings prior to taking enforcement action following a full site inspection on a small number of buildings and has provided initial advice to a number of others. A number of improvement notices have been issued by the local authorities that have been supported by the team. In some cases, the building owner is challenging the improvement notices, and hearings at the first-tier tribunal in relation to them were expected to be heard in April or May but have been deferred due to the pandemic.
14. The team is being funded by MHCLG for a second year and is recruiting staff currently. Inspections by the JIT have effectively been halted by Covid -9, irrespective of staffing turnover. Issues include use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for the team, accommodation for the team and the ability of host councils to participate. The intention is to recommence inspections as soon as the current recruitment process allows, and PPE and accommodation are available.

Data collection on external wall systems

15. In July 2019 councils were asked by MHCLG to collect data on the external wall systems on all high-rise residential buildings in England. MHCLG had hoped that the exercise would be complete by March 2020, although it was recognised that for some councils with large numbers of blocks this would be a challenge. Approximately 50 per cent of data had been collected by that date and while work continues and is regarded as a priority by MHCLG, it has been impacted by Covid-19 issues.

Non-ACM remediation funding

16. The government announced a £1bn fund for the removal of non-ACM cladding as part of the budget in March 2020.
17. On 2 April MHCLG published the results of tests carried out on non-ACM cladding materials which indicated the dangerous nature of most High-Pressure Laminate, all metal composite material, and some timber cladding systems.
18. On 6 April MHCLG [wrote to stakeholders](#), giving more detail on the funding and in late May published a [prospectus](#) setting out the details of registration, which opened in the first week of June and lasts until 31 July. Remediation will not be funded for buildings that are not registered by 31 July, but registration itself does not guarantee funding.
19. The fund has a maximum value of £1bn and will be awarded on a first-come-first-served basis; work should be able to commence on site in the 2020/21 financial year and buildings will need to submit a full funding application based on a tender price before December 2020. Owners can register if they suspect they may have dangerous cladding and MHCLG is offering unspecified support in establishing whether they do. Residents



are being advised to ask owners if the cladding is safe and then contact the Ministry if the owner is not taking action.

20. The fund will cover buildings over 17.7m, with non-ACM cladding that does not comply with the buildings regulations.
21. In the social sector it will cover:
 - 21.1. the costs that would otherwise be passed on to leaseholders via the service charge (NB this funding does not require councils to register, it can be claimed later, and details will be available after 31 July); or
 - 21.2. the full cost if remediation costs threaten the financial viability of the provider or the Housing Revenue Account - HRA (this requires a statement by a section 151 officer).
22. In the private sector it will cover the costs that would be passed to leaseholders where the building owners can show they have 'explored every opportunity to fund remediation from sources other than private residential leaseholders and Government funding'.
23. It will not cover buildings where owners had committed to do the work prior to the announcement or to non-residential buildings, for example hotels, hospitals and buildings where there are no residential leaseholders.
24. The creation of this fund represents a victory for the LGA, which had been calling attention to the scale of the financial threat to leaseholders and the need to act on non-ACM cladding for well over two years beforehand (as had residents' groups). Nevertheless, the Government's insistence that it will not meet the bill in full if it rises beyond £1bn (which we believe it will by a considerable margin) and the reluctance to fund social sector remediation are unsatisfactory. The latter is likely to have a significant impact on the ability of councils to meet Government housebuilding ambitions and on housing improvement programmes.
25. LGA officers have raised the difficulty councils will have in establishing the viability of the HRA ahead of the 31 July deadline with MHCLG and pointed out that many private owners still do not know what is on their buildings, given that councils efforts to establish what is on the sides of every high-rise block are only about 50 per cent complete. It is therefore likely that some leaseholder-owned blocks genuinely have no idea they may have a problem.

Reform

26. As promised in the ministerial statement on 20 January, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has become the new building safety regulator (initially in shadow form) and Dame

Judith Hackitt is chairing a board to oversee the transition to this new regime. The promised first national chief inspector of buildings has yet to be recruited.

Fire Safety Bill

27. The Bill has now passed its second reading in the House of Commons. The LGA [briefed](#) MPs for the debate. While the LGA welcomed the Bill, we raised a number of concerns:

- 27.1. The Bill could lead to significant costs for local authorities as housing stockholders. Despite officers' requests the Impact Assessment was not published until after the debate and this document has increased our concern. Discussions with councils suggest that the cost of including cladding systems in fire risk assessments is much higher than the Home Office realises.
- 27.2. Disparities between the Fire Safety Order's concept of a Responsible Person and the proposals for an Accountable Person and a Building Safety Manager contained in the Government's response to the [Building A Safer Future consultation response](#) could confuse duty holders and cause complexity in regulation. Subsequent discussions with officials have not eased these concerns, in particular because it now appears that the Building Safety Bill will not legislate to ensure that mixed use buildings have a single accountable person.
- 27.3. The Government needs to ensure that there are enough trained professionals to carry out the new-style fire risk assessments. There is a chronic shortage of fire engineering expertise in the UK at present. The Government needs to act now to set up degree, conversion and apprenticeship schemes to address this – without more fire engineers the Bill may fail. These concerns have subsequently intensified as a result of discussions with professional bodies and NFCC. There is a risk that the government could require assessments that simply cannot be obtained. We have raised these concerns with officials who accept this risk needs to be managed
- 27.4. Similarly, we are concerned at the impact the Bill could have on insurance costs and have raised this with officials who are managing the risk.
- 27.5. The Government should not make councils and other freeholders responsible for issues beyond their control. The Bill makes duty-holders responsible for fire doors, even if they are owned by leaseholders. Requiring councils to inspect fire doors is likely to prove unworkable and extremely costly. We have raised this with officials and have drawn some recent relevant case law to their attention
- 27.6. Ministers need to clarify if existing fire risk assessments are still valid. There are half a million fire risk assessments in social housing and redoing them all in short order would be very expensive and logistically challenging. We understand this is

not the Government's intention, but it would reassure councils if that was stated in Parliament.

27.7. We have various concerns about the practicalities of some of the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry that are to be added to the Bill via secondary legislation, which is to be subject to a consultation in coming months.

28. The Bill should be considered in committee later this month and the LGA will be raising these concerns, while supporting the Bill in principle.

Response to Building a Safer Future consultation

29. On 2 April, the Government published a number of documents including [a summary of responses to the consultation](#), [its response](#) and [impact assessments](#).

30. The response defines the scope of the new regime as 'all multi-occupied residential buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or more than six storeys (whichever is reached first)'. This is expected to add approximately 1500 buildings to the number in scope. The fact that this height trigger would still not capture the Cube student residence in Bolton, which suffered a fire last November with near-fatal consequences involving an as yet unidentified form of high-pressure laminate cladding, helps make the point that height is an ineffective measure of risk.

31. The response contains several points the LGA has lobbied for:

31.1. The higher-risk regime can expand over time, potentially bring buildings under 18m into scope (although we would prefer a more sophisticated approach than simply lower the height trigger).

31.2. there will be a transition period for existing in-scope buildings. This is important given the scale of work that will be involved in some buildings and the shortage of appropriate skills in the UK.

31.3. new buildings will come under the regime at the planning stage if they are over 18m rather than 30m as originally proposed.

31.4. building owners cannot chose their building control regulator for buildings in scope. The response states that 'the skills, expertise and capacity of local authority building control will provide the main support for the new regulator and be complemented by Approved Inspectors where required'.

32. However, the relationship between the new regulator and local authority building control and local fire and rescue services remains unclear.

33. Crucially the response admits that the Government has still not worked out how to make the proposals affordable, in particular for leaseholders and in respect of the employment of a Building Safety Manager. It also sets out what duties residents will be under not to

endanger others in their block. However, nothing is said about utility companies who might breach compartmentation while installing services etc.

34. We expect the Building Safety Bill to be published in draft form and submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny in July.

35. The Bill will make arrangements for new competence frameworks and oversight bodies. SSCB lead members decided to support the bid by Local Authority Building Control to become the oversight body for building control.

Approved Document B

36. On 27 May the Government announced that the height at which sprinklers will be required in new buildings will be lowered to 11m from November, and changes will also be made requiring improved wayfinding signage to assist firefighters.

37. The lowering of the sprinkler height is the successful outcome of a long period of lobbying by the LGA, in particular the Fire Commission and FSMC and the NFCC.

38. The Government is delaying a requirement for evacuation alert systems in high-rise buildings. The LGA called for this delay, as the proposal had not been properly thought through.

Action on mortgages for properties in high-rise residential buildings

39 The LGA remains concerned at the continuing insurance and mortgage issues faced by leaseholders in blocks that have dangerous cladding (or where leaseholders cannot prove they do not have dangerous cladding) and the difficulties faced by surveyors seeking insurance to demonstrate that cladding is safe.

40 It is clear that mortgage lenders are increasingly demanding that EWS1 forms are provided by those applying for mortgages on flats even in blocks under 11m and there have been examples of these requests being made in relation to buildings that have no cladding.

41 The EWS1 form provides assurance that a building has a safe cladding system, but there is a shortage of skilled professionals to provide this assurance and those that can, do the work have experienced difficulties in obtaining professional immunity insurance.

42 On 2 April the Government announced that:

42.1 An industry group has been set up to design a data-sharing portal so that lenders and leaseholders can access the information needed to proceed with sales and re-mortgaging for buildings 18 metres and over, building on the introduction of a new process to support valuation through an 'EWS1' form. (the form that says what the external wall system is).

42.2 The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is leading efforts to devise an approach to apply 'reasonable and proportionate valuation judgement' to buildings under 18 metres.

42.3 Measures will be put in place to support construction professionals who have experienced challenges in accessing adequate Professional Indemnity Insurance and support for fire engineers who are advising on the safety of high-rise and other complex buildings.

43 LGA officers have raised this issue on several occasions with MHCLG who are pursuing discussions with the insurance and mortgage-lending industry.

Ongoing work

Joint Regulators Group

44 As members will recall from previous meetings, MHCLG has been progressing development of policy and legislative options for implementation the new building safety regulatory framework through the Joint Regulators Group. This work has continued following the Covid-19 outbreak, but some meetings have been postponed. The Bill timetable has not yet been extended however and we anticipate that it will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny, possibly by the housing select committee before the summer recess.

45 The LGA submitted written evidence to the HCLG Select Committee inquiry into cladding and responded to a consultation on lowering the height threshold for the ban on combustible cladding.

Implications for Wales

46 Building regulations and fire and rescue services are devolved responsibilities of the Welsh Assembly Government, and the main implications arising from the recommendations of the Hackitt Review and the government's response to it are on building regulations and fire safety in England. However the Welsh government has announced that it will be making the changes recommended in the report to the regulatory system in Wales, and the LGA has been keeping in contact to ensure the WLGA is kept informed of the latest developments in England.

Financial Implications

47 Although the LGA has set up the Joint Inspection Team, the cost of doing so is being met by MHCLG. Other work arising from this report will continue to be delivered within the planned staffing budget, which includes an additional fixed term post in the safer communities team to support the LGA's building safety work.

Next steps

48 Officers to continue to support the sector's work to keep residents safe and reform the buildings safety system, as directed by members.



Safer and Stronger Communities End of Year Report 2019/20 and 2020/21 work plan

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

This paper sets out the Safer and Stronger Communities end of year report, including initial proposals for the 2020/21 work plan.

Recommendations

That members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board note the end of year report and consider the Board's work priorities for 2019/20.

Actions

Officers to prepare a paper setting out the proposed work plan for 2020/21 in line with the Board's feedback, for consideration at the September meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 0207 664 3219
Email: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

Safer and Stronger Communities End of Year Report 2019/20 and 2020/21 work plan

Background

1. At its meeting in September the Board considered its priorities for 2019/20 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
 - 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. As the Board will be aware from item 3 of the agenda, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of the work plan agreed in September, with resources diverted towards the activity set out in that paper. It is expected that the ongoing impact of Covid-19 will continue to divert the team's capacity away from some of our normal areas of focus, as well as creating specific Covid-19 pieces of work in the areas that we are able to continue to prioritise.
4. Feedback from members on their priorities for next year will subsequently be developed into a full paper for consideration at the first meeting of the 2019/20 Board cycle in September.

Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion

- 5 We have run two well-attended leadership essentials courses for councillors on Prevent and cohesion & integration. Unfortunately, a further two courses planned for the year had to be cancelled because of the General Election and pandemic respectively.
- 6 We have continued with our work to develop and facilitate two online knowledge hubs to develop and share good practice on countering extremism and Prevent delivery. Over the year, membership of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) KHub has grown to include officers from 90 councils, alongside representatives from other

statutory partners, providing a platform for disseminating resources, sharing challenges and responses to extremism issues and linking local authorities facing similar threats, including emerging issues related to the pandemic; our work has included developing case studies and other guidance materials for publication on the site. We have also grown the Prevent KHub to include membership from 85 councils, alongside other partner agencies.

- 7 We have worked with the SIGCE to establish two new elected member networks in the North and East of England, complementing our existing Prevent member networks in Yorkshire & Humber, and the North East. The networks have brought together local leaders across each region to help understand and respond to emerging threats and provide mutual support. We have also assisted with the delivery of a SIGCE seminar on women and extremism and its links to misogyny; and supported an event at Leeds council for over 150 delegates on Bridging Northern communities, to explore common issues facing communities across the North of England around radicalisation, extremism and integration.
- 8 Working with SIGCE colleagues we formed a new working group to explore and respond to the challenges facing councils from Islamist extremism, and continued to work with the SIGCE's far-right working group, responding to challenges from far-right extremism. The latter includes supporting the development of a community dialogue project to trial and evaluate practical approaches to engage communities around cohesion issues and build resilience to far-right extremist narratives (while some of this work has had to be paused during Covid-19, it is hoped this will continue into next year).
- 9 We have contributed to the SIGCE's formal evaluation and continued to lobby for further central government funding to support the SIGCE's work for 2020 onwards.
- 10 We have completed guidance for scrutiny councillors on Prevent and counter-extremism (publication has been delayed due to the pandemic but is expected imminently).
- 11 We worked with the Commission for Countering Extremism to host a roundtable to explore harms from extremism, which fed into the Commission's October 2019 report on Challenging Hateful Extremism and have had discussions with Home Office officials regarding the Counter-Extremism Strategy. Plans for two further cohesion and integration events in Spring 2020 had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.
- 12 In December 2019 we provided a submission in response to a call for evidence from the Independent Review of Prevent. Over the year we also fed in sector views to the review of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for the supervision of offenders convicted of terrorism or terrorism related offences; and the establishment of CONTEST Multi-Agency Centre Pilots, aimed at better understanding and managing risks from individuals who have been subject to national security investigations.

Community safety

- 13 On **domestic abuse**, we have been active and influential in our lobbying of Government and Parliament regarding to the Domestic Abuse Bill, with Cllr Simon Blackburn giving oral evidence to Draft Domestic Abuse Bill Committee, the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on Domestic Abuse and the House of Commons Domestic Abuse Public Bill. The LGA also [briefed](#) Parliamentarians through various debate stages of the Domestic Abuse Bill, which has now returned to Parliament. Several MPs referred to our key messages, with some MPs explicitly highlighting the local government finance gap and our calls for investment in early intervention and prevention. We have also indicated our support for the Safe Lives' campaign calling for a National Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy.
- 14 We submitted a [response](#) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's consultation on domestic abuse accommodation support and services. We continue to liaise with the Department to ensure the proposals are fully funded. The LGA continues to provide contributions to the National Oversight Group on domestic abuse.
- 15 On **serious violence**, the LGA continues to contribute to national-level strategic discussions on serious violent crime and county lines activity, as members of the Serious Violence Taskforce and the County Lines Working Group, as well as contributing to the Prime Minister's Serious Violent Crime Summit and the Children's Commissioner's Gangs Summit. Our Chair met with many key stakeholders working on this agenda: including the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden and the Chief Executive of the Ben Kinsella Trust, Patrick Green.
- 16 Following a successful Annual Conference workshop session on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, we held an LGA conference focusing on this important issue in October 2019 and held a sub-plenary session at the National Children and Adult Services Conference in November 2019. We also held an LGA conference on tackling knife crime, which over 65 councils were represented and over 100 delegates in attendance. Unfortunately a planned county lines conference and councillor training were both postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 17 The LGA submitted a response to the Home Office's consultation on a serious violence duty and continue to work with the Government to shape the forthcoming Serious Violence Bill and statutory guidance. We also submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs) and [briefed](#) MPs ahead of the Offensive Weapons Bill.
- 18 We pushed our key messages on tackling serious violent crime in Parliament, with Cllr Simon Blackburn giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on serious violent crime and briefing MPs and Peers ahead of a number of Parliamentary debates in which our briefings were quoted. The Home Affairs Committee report reinforced our calls

for greater investment in youth and children's services, to prompt a shift towards early intervention and prevention in tackling serious violent crime.

- 19 We published a range of guidance documents relating to tackling **modern slavery**, including a series of case studies, a councillor guide and specific guidance on tackling exploitation in hand car washes. We have continued to engage with a range of stakeholders, including the Home Office's Modern Slavery Unity, third sector organisations, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, National Crime Agency and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Dame Sara Thornton, to discuss the role of councils in disrupting slavery and supporting victims, and the challenges facing them in doing so.
- 20 The LGA continues to contribute to Government strategic discussions on tackling **anti-social behaviour** and regularly attends the Home Office-led Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board. We hosted a well-attended conference on anti-social behaviour in October 2019; our annual Police and Crime Panels workshop, where we launched updated guidance for panels, also attracted over 60 delegates.
- 21 The LGA has been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise councils' concerns about **unauthorised encampments**. In March 2020, the LGA submitted its [response](#) to the Government [consultation](#) on strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.
- 22 The LGA has continue to support the National **FGM** Centre this year in partnership with Barnardo's. Cllr Anita Lower has continued to chair the Centre's Advisory Group and to represent the LGA at conferences run by the Centre on FGM and other harmful practices. We have supported the Centre to develop their sustainability plan and to continue to lobby government for an extension of the Centre's funding.

Water Safety

- 23 Whilst the publication on the independent review of the legal framework for beach safety commissioned by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has been delayed, members received an update on key recommendations from the reviews author at the March SSCB meeting. The review will make recommendations for greater clarity about responsibilities for beach management and is expected to be published later this year.
- 24 The National Fire Chief's Council water safety lead, Dawn Whittaker ran a workshop session on water safety at the LGA's Fire Conference in March which was an opportunity to promote the importance of community leadership in tackling the issue of drowning.

Blue light services and civil resilience

- 25 We have continued to work on fire reform, inputting into the inspection process and holding a position on the Fire Standards Board. We have held a number of workshops on the issues raised by the inspectorate and they formed a large part of the discussion at the Annual Fire Conference. At Conference we launched our new publication on the [Climate emergency for fire and rescue services](#); the report outlines the basis of concerns around climate change from the perspective of the fire sector.
- 26 We have provided two leadership essentials programmes for our **fire and rescue authority** (FRA) members to highlight particular issues facing the fire sector, including information on workforce reform, inspection, inclusion and diversity, Home Office priorities, and governance. We ran an Inclusion and Diversity Masterclass in the South West which brought together members and officers to consider how to best address this issue in collaboration.
- 27 We have created a new Inclusion and Diversity Champion Network for FRA members, aimed at supporting improvement in local services. The Network meets to share good practice and will work to produce outputs including a standard role description for diversity and inclusion champions and other resources.
- 28 We have published a guide for members entitled "[Leading the fire sector: Oversight of fire and rescue service performance](#)" to provide an overview of governance in the sector and provide advice on performance overview and scrutiny. To accompany the guide we held two workshops for members on governance and oversight of performance and shorter workshop at LGA Fire Conference.
- 29 We organised two councillor training events on civil resilience, in the North East and for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum area: both were very well received. Officers continued to liaise with MHCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division regarding local mutual aid processes. However, planned work to develop tools to support councils with building community resilience in relation to emergency responses was overtaken by events, in terms of Covid-19 (which may have helped achieve this objective more comprehensively than our work would have done!).

Licensing and regulation

- 30 We published a series of guidance documents on **alcohol licensing**, including a councillor handbook on the Licensing Act and a series of case studies on the night time economy. We also worked with Public Health England to revise our joint guidance for councils' public health teams on engaging with alcohol licensing. The guidance provides practical ways that public health can input into the licensing process and includes some new local examples of how teams have made effective contributions.
- 31 In March we delivered the first Leadership Essentials course for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of licensing committees. The course focused on effective chairing and the wider

leadership role for licensing, understanding key areas of licensing and exploring how a good licensing committee works and makes decisions. The course was over-subscribed and received extremely positive feedback.

- 32 On **taxis**, we continue to promote the use of the National Register of taxi licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3) following its launch in 2018. Over 70 councils are now using the register as part of their licensing checks and in total there have been over 30,000 searches of the register.
- 32.1 We took an active role in a taxi fees court case given the wider sector impact. Following a judicial review of Wakefield council by the local taxi and private hire association, the Court of Appeal ruled earlier this year that councils can recover the costs of monitoring and enforcing driver conduct as part of the fees they charge for taxi driver licences. This ruling is particularly significant as lack of clarity in the legislation has meant that many councils have not been recovering these enforcement costs and instead have subsidised them through other funds. We are pleased that a clear legal basis has now been established, and developed an advice note for councils on the implications of this ruling.
- 32.2 We have continued to call on Government to stick to the commitment that was made last year to strengthen out of date taxi and private hire legislation to improve passenger safety. The Covid-19 pandemic appears to have yet again delayed publication of the Government's updated statutory guidance on taxi and PHV licensing.

Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners

- 33 The planned work on crematoria, coroners and medical examiners has been impacted significantly by Covid-19, with additional work required as outlined in agenda item 4. This work has involved not only crematoria and burial services, but also registrars and emergency planners.
- 34 The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation into the funeral market was originally paused during the Covid-19 outbreak acknowledging the pressure that local authorities were under. However, the CMA is required by statute to complete its investigation by 27 March 2021. They have therefore announced that submissions on the working papers they released in February are due by the 12 June, with any final submissions needed by 19 June. A response from the Board will be signed off by Lead Members.

Supporting councils to respond to the Grenfell tragedy

- 35 Officers have continued to lead the LGA's building safety work, following the Grenfell Tower fire three years ago. Our lobbying has influenced several changes to policy: the lowering of the height at which sprinklers are required in new buildings; the lowering of

the height at which combustible materials are banned from external wall systems (the government has announced its intention to do this); the provision of £1bn of funding for the remediation of dangerous non-ACM cladding and the application of that funding to buildings just under 18m.

- 36 Officers have participated in the Fire Protection Board (FPB), which is overseeing improvements to the fire safety inspection of high-rise buildings; the Joint Regulators Group, which is supporting the development of the new building safety regime and a working group on guidance around the new Fire Safety Bill. Notable outcomes of this work include: important changes to the wording of the questions posed to fire services by the FPB (to prevent a transfer of responsibility from duty-holder to FRSs); improvements to the proposed machinery around FPB inspection and reporting; lowering of the height at which buildings will come under the building safety regulator at the planning stage from 30m to 18m; ongoing changes to guidance and regulation that support 'quick wins' around FRS influence on the existing planning and building control process; confirmation that local authority building control will be the sole provider of building control regulation for buildings 'in scope' under the Building Safety Bill.
- 37 We have liaised with HSE as it sets up the Building Safety Regulator in shadow form, ensuring it considers councils perspective.
- 38 The LGA has hosted the Joint Inspection Team, whose activities are detailed in the Building Safety Update paper.
- 39 We have continued to raise concerns around large panel system buildings and helped to arrange a roundtable for owners earlier this year.
- 40 We have updated our advice to councils on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and have participated in a cross-Government group on RAAC,
- 41 We plan to continue the above activities, as the Fire Safety Bill proceeds through its passage and as the Building Safety Bill enters pre-legislative scrutiny next month and then comes before Parliament, to ensure the new regime delivers an effective safety regime, protects the financial position of leaseholders and is workable for stockholding councils.

Britain's exit from the EU

- 42 Throughout the second half of 2019, officers contributed to the LGA's Brexit work, in relation to both regulatory services (which would have been significantly impacted by a no deal outcome) and emergency planning, with local resilience work heavily focused on planning for a no-deal Brexit.



2020/21 Priorities

- 43 It is expected that the themes for the 2019/20 work priorities will remain broadly consistent with 2019/20, with a number of workstreams continuing into the new Board cycle. However, as noted, it is likely that part of the team’s capacity will continue to be diverted to the Covid-19 response for the foreseeable future, which will impact other areas of team activity. This has been factored into the work plan below, and it is hoped that we may be able to provide a firmer outline in September.
- 44 The table below sets out some initial thinking on workstreams that will continue into the new Board cycle, subject to the Board’s views:

| Priority area | Proposed activity |
|---|--|
| Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support councils in their work to deliver the Prevent duty, counter-extremism and community cohesion, including through the provision of further training courses and events, facilitation of the Prevent Knowledge Hub, and the publication of further guidance and case studies. • Continue to lobby for further funding to support the work of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE), and support its programme of work to respond to emerging extremism challenges, including through elected member networks, seminars and the online Knowledge Hub, and the SIGCE’s working groups. • Support councils facing emerging cohesion and extremism issues arising from the pandemic, including developing case studies on responding to cohesion and integration challenges. • Collate and feedback sector views in response to: proposals for Prevent regionalisation; the Law Commission’s review of hate crime; proposals for a new Protect duty; an updated Counter-Extremism strategy. |
| Community safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to make the case for greater investment in early intervention and preventions approaches to tackling domestic abuse and more effective intervention programmes. This will include lobbying on the Domestic Abuse Bill and Government’s wider work on accommodation and support services for those impacted by domestic abuse. • Support councils in tackling serious violence and related issues such as county lines and run a series of webinars and events for councils. • Make the case for councils to be appropriately funded to support their work on modern slavery. |



| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a webinar session to share best practice on tackling anti-social behavior and continue to contribute to the Home Office’s Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board • Engage with government and support councils on a range of community safety issues, including gypsy and travellers and burglary. • Take forward work delayed from 2019/20 looking at resilience in community safety issues. • Publish guidance on the community trigger and public health approaches to serious violence. • Host a range of webinars and events for councils on community safety issues. |
| Blue light services and civil resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We anticipated that there will be a range of resilience related work linked to the pandemic, including identifying learning and best practice, and working with councils to identify what changes councils would like to see to emergency management going forward. |
| Licensing and regulation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Lobby government to publish new statutory guidance for councils on taxi licensing as soon as possible and support council’s with its implementation • Work with Home Office officials to explore an increase in licensing fees. • Deliver another Leadership Essentials course for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of licensing committees |
| Support councils to respond to Grenfell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to participate in JRG, FPB and similar groups • Continue to host JIT • Lobby around passage of Fire Safety and Building Safety Bills |
| Britain’s exit from the EU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers will contribute to the LGA’s work to support councils on any issues arising from Britain’s exit from the EU. |
| Crematoria, coroners and registrars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We anticipate that there will be a range of work related to resilience in the death management processes including crematoria and registrars’ service. • Officers will continue to respond to the CMA investigation on the funerals market on aspects that affect local authorities |

45 The Board’s views on any other areas they would like us to focus on would be very helpful.

15 June 2020



Implications for Wales

- 46 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

- 47 None. The work priorities identified for 2020/21 will be delivered within the planned staffing budget and grant funding available from the LGA's MHCLG grant.

Next steps

- 48 The Board are asked to reflect on the work delivered this year, and consider and comment on their priorities for 2020/21.



Update Paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Board not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

That members of the Board note and comment on the update.

Action

Officers to action any matters arising from the discussion as appropriate.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3241
Email: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

Update Paper

Background

1. This paper updates Board members on non-Covid-19 activity undertaken by the team since last the Board meeting. As some Government work has been delayed by Covid-19 and most of our work has been focused on the pandemic and covered in the Covid-19 update, this paper is therefore shorter than usual.

Domestic Abuse

2. Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, [gave evidence to the Domestic Abuse Public Bill Committee](#). In the session, Cllr Blackburn highlighted the need to reduce incidences of domestic abuse, the importance of offering a broad range of support packages for victims, interventions for perpetrators, and ensuring that services are fully funded and adequately resourced. The Bill will continue to be scrutinised by the Public Bill Committee over a series of evidence sessions, scheduled to last until 17 June. The Bill will then have Report Stage and Third Reading in the House of Commons, before passing to the House of Lords.
3. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, has written an [article](#) on improving the response to domestic abuse, which features in our First Magazine (May edition).

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

4. In March 2020, the LGA submitted its [response](#) to the Government [consultation](#) on strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.

Prevent, counter-extremism, and cohesion and integration

5. In March we hosted a meeting between local authorities and Jonathan Hall QC, who is leading a review of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for the supervision of offenders convicted of terrorism or terrorism-related offences, to feed in sector views.
6. On 4 June the LGA published a [statement](#) on local government's commitment to tackling racism, affirming that the LGA stands with councils in the UK and across the world in their work to tackle racism and that everyone must be part of the conversation on how to confront and end it.

Trading Standards

7. National Trading Standards' have published their [2019-20 Annual Report](#), which provides an overview of NTS's work on a broad range of issues including doorstep crime, eCrime, safety at ports, scams, animal health and feed, knife crime and regional investigations. NTS are also developing an infographic summarising their work, which we will share with the Board once it is available.

Gambling advertising and marketing and young people

8. At the end of March, GambleAware published the findings of [research](#) into the impact of gambling advertising and marketing on children, young people and vulnerable adults. The research, which was conducted by Ipsos MORI and the Institute for Social Marketing at the University of Stirling, found that gambling is now seen as part of everyday life for these groups and highlighted the following:
 - 8.1. Exposure to gambling advertising, including on social media, can have an impact on attitudes towards the prevalence and acceptability of gambling, and in turn the likelihood that a child, young person or vulnerable adult will gamble in the future.
 - 8.2. Children are regularly exposed to gambling advertising on social media platforms – researchers found that 41,000 UK followers of gambling related accounts on the social media platform were likely to be under 16.
 - 8.3. The attitudes and gambling behaviours of peers and parents are also critical in shaping gambling activity; they were significantly associated with both a young person's exposure to brands and advertising, as well as with current gambling amongst those aged 11-24. If a child or young person has a close friend or carer who gambles, that individual was found to be six times more likely to be a current gambler, than those without such a connection.
9. The report also identified a number of recommendations, including:
 - 9.1. the need for clearer safer gambling messages and campaigns
 - 9.2. a requirement to improve education initiatives
 - 9.3. a reduction in the appeal of gambling adverts to children
 - 9.4. improved use of advertising technology, to minimise the exposure of such content to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Modern slavery guidance

10. In March, the Home Office finally published statutory guidance under section 49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. As modern slavery policy is continuing to evolve, the Home Office has established a Statutory Guidance Reference Group to provide a forum for ongoing discussions about amendments to the guidance, which the LGA has been asked to be a standing member of. It is expected that meetings will take place on a quarterly basis.
11. The Home Office is undertaking work to look at the intersection between modern slavery and homelessness/housing; with high needs groups, and to look more fundamentally at the long-term future of the NRM. Although engagement with councils on these issues was paused in March, we expect discussions on this to resume in the coming weeks and months.



Competition and Markets Authority Funerals investigation

12. The statutory deadline for the CMA investigation into the supply of crematoria services and the supply of services by funeral directors has been extended by 6 months, which is the maximum permitted. The new statutory deadline is 27 March 2021 to allow for consultation following the publication of the Provisional Decision report. Any further submissions or key point related to the investigation should be made by the 19 June 2020 ahead of the publication of the Provisional Decision report. For more information about the investigation please visit the [funerals market investigation page](#).