



People & Places Board

Agenda

Tuesday, 23 January 2024
1.00 pm

Hybrid Meeting - Bruce-Lockhart Room,
18 Smith Square and Online via Microsoft
Teams

There will be a meeting of the People & Places Board at **1.00 pm on Tuesday, 23 January 2024**
Hybrid Meeting - Bruce-Lockhart Room, 18 Smith Square and Online.

LGA Hybrid Meetings

All of our meetings are available to join in person at [18 Smith Square](#) or remotely via videoconference as part of our hybrid approach. We will ask you to confirm in advance if you will be joining each meeting in person or remotely so we can plan accordingly, if you wish to attend the meeting in person, please also remember to confirm whether you have any dietary/accessibility requirements. 18 Smith Square is a Covid-19 secure venue and measures are in place to keep you safe when you attend a meeting or visit the building in person.

[Please see guidance for Members and Visitors to 18 Smith Square here](#)

Catering and Refreshments:

If the meeting is scheduled to take place at lunchtime, a sandwich lunch will be available.

Political Group meetings and pre-meetings for Lead Members:

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: labgp@lga.gov.uk |
| Independent: | Group Office: 020 7664 3224 | email: independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk |
| Liberal Democrat: | Group Office: 020 7664 3235 | email: libdem@local.gov.uk |

Attendance:

Your attendance, whether it be in person or virtual, will be noted by the clerk at the meeting.

LGA Contact:

Emma West
emma.west@local.gov.uk

Carers' Allowance

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme, a Carer's Allowance of National Living Wage and/or 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.

People & Places Board – Membership 2023/24

[Click here for accessible information on membership](#)

| Councillor | Authority |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Conservative (11) | |
| Cllr Martin Tett (Chairman) | Buckinghamshire Council |
| Cllr Louise McKinlay (Vice Chairman) | Essex County Council |
| Cllr Eddie Reeves | Oxfordshire County Council |
| Cllr Marc Bayliss | Worcestershire County Council |
| Cllr Kris Wilson | Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council |
| Cllr Hilary Carrick | Westmorland and Furness Council |
| Cllr Colin Noble | Suffolk County Council |
| Cllr Rachel Bailey | Cheshire East Council |
| Cllr Jordan Meade | Gravesham Borough Council |
| Cllr Tim Oliver | Surrey County Council |
| Cllr Victoria Wilson | Staffordshire County Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Lewis Cocking | Broxbourne Borough Council |
| Cllr Sonia Wilcox | Lichfield District Council |
| Cllr Phillip King | Harborough District Council |
| Labour (4) | |
| Cllr Amanda Serjeant (Deputy Chair) | Chesterfield Borough Council |
| Cllr Lisa Brown | Cumberland Council |
| Cllr Simon Henig CBE | Durham County Council |
| Cllr Damien Greenhalgh | High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Sam Carling | Cambridge City Council |
| Cllr Linda Smith | Oxford City Council |
| Liberal Democrat (4) | |
| Cllr Caroline Leaver (Vice-Chair) | Devon County Council |
| Cllr Emily Smith | Vale of White Horse District Council |
| Cllr Michael Mullaney | Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council |
| Cllr Alex Wagner | Shropshire Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Oliver Patrick | Somerset Council |
| Independent (3) | |
| Cllr Emily O'Brien (Deputy Chair) | Lewes District Council |
| Cllr Kevin Etheridge | Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| Cllr Julian Dean | Shropshire Council |
| Substitutes | |
| Cllr Carolyne Culver | West Berkshire Council |

Agenda

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

1.00 pm

Hybrid Meeting - Bruce-Lockhart Room, 18 Smith Square and Online via Microsoft Teams

| Item | |
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| 7. Universal Support | 53 - 58 |

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 12 March 2024, 1.00 pm, Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 14 November 2023

Smith Square 1 & 2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#)

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

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

The Chair welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were received by Cllr Smith and Cllr Oliver. Cllr King attended the meeting as a substitute.

No declarations of interest were received.

The Chair noted that Council meetings were often held on Tuesdays which created a clash with Board meetings and asked that Member Services attempt to change at least one of the Board meetings which fell on a Tuesday for the 2023/24 cycle and avoid Tuesdays in the future.

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------|
| 2 | Minutes of the last meeting |
|----------|------------------------------------|

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

| | |
|----------|---------------------------|
| 3 | Terms of Reference |
|----------|---------------------------|

The Chair stated that item 3 and item 4 would be taken together.

The Chair alluded to the change of focus regarding the newly formed Local Infrastructure Net Zero (LINZ) Board and the Economy & Resources (E&R) Board, specifically, the housing and transport element.

In addition to the Chair's comment, Members made the following contributions:

- The need for a productive and structured relationship with both the LINZ and E&R Boards where value could be added, specifically in relation to bringing in a rural, non-metropolitan perspective, was expressed.
- The importance of addressing challenges for non-metropolitan areas and low wage economies was emphasised, particularly in relation to transport-related issues, planning and linking up

sustainably.

- It was suggested that the Board share real examples of best practice with both the LINZ and E&R Boards.
- A comment was made which related to Transport Boards across the country, their effectiveness, similarities between them and their successes.
- A concern was raised regarding the lack of clarity in relation to planning and which elements of planning sat under each of the Board's remits, if any.
- It was suggested that the Board focus on issues related to homelessness, ensuring that both short-term and long-term measures were in place and the work that the voluntary sector were undertaking in relation to homelessness.
- A comment was made which related to the changes in tenures regarding private residential lets to holiday lets and its impact on the residential population, business communities and councils.
- A concern was raised which related to Homes England and the way in which it delivered affordable housing solutions and other services.
- It was suggested that the Board work with the LINZ Board on issues related to Home to School transport, and the lack of public transport available in the evenings, particularly in rural areas.
- It was suggested that the Board focus on issues related to housing and town centre regeneration.
- It was suggested that New Town development corporations, their legacy and impact in terms of housing development, be looked at in further detail by the Board.
- A concern was raised which related to the Rural mobility fund which would end in Autumn 2024.
- The Chair suggested that work be undertaken to look more closely at Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it's used as an application, how it improves efficiency and customer experience and reduces costs.

Decision:

- Board Members noted both the revised Terms of Reference and the Work Plan.

Actions:

- Board Members to submit their views to officers outside of the meeting.
- Officers to work alongside the LINZ and E&R Boards regarding the People & Places Board's work plan.

4 Work Plan

Item 3 and Item 4 were taken together, please refer to minute 3 for further details.

5 Rural Services Network

The Chair welcomed **Kerry Booth, Chief Executive – Rural Services Network (RSN)**, and invited her to present a series of slides to the Board related to the work being undertaken by the RSN and some additional background information.

Members made the following contributions:

- A question was asked which related to the RSN working with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Rural Services to raise awareness of the current funding situation for rural councils.
- It was suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Board which related to fair funding, focused on health and wellbeing, population, and transport in rural areas.
- It was suggested that anti-social behaviour, broadband and connectivity, social care, transport and access to employment be focused on as key issues within rural areas.
- A comment was made which related to devolution in non-metropolitan areas.
- The importance of ensuring that the true meaning of devolution was not lost was emphasised.
- The importance of district councils, their local knowledge and the impact on the prosperity of their local areas was emphasised.
- A concern was raised regarding the lack of financial inclusion and pockets of hidden deprivation in rural areas.
- The weekly RSN bulletin was welcomed.
- A question was asked which related to the impact that loneliness and social isolation had on people's wellbeing, and the way in which local government could support communities and rural businesses struggling to recruit.
- A concern was raised which related to the reduction in bus services and routes in rural areas.
- It was suggested by the Chair that Members note the commonality between topics already explored by the Board in the past and include more recent suggestions in the Board's work plan for the 2023/24 cycle.
- It was suggested by the Chair that the Board's work plan be shared with the RSN and Coastal Special Interest Groups (SIGS) to ensure that best practices were shared and to form joint working arrangements.

Kerry responded to Members' comments and questions setting out the following points:

- Whilst the RSN just covered England, there was a lot to be learnt from Wales and Scotland regarding rural policy working arrangements.
- The RSN had worked with the APPG on several issues in 2023 regarding transport, off-grid energy homes and the requirement to move away from fossil fuel boilers by 2025. The deadline had since moved to 2035, and the RSN continued to work with APPG to ensure that people were ready to make their homes energy efficient.
- The RSN were keen to share work and best practices with the LGA and Coastal SIGS.

- The importance of ensuring that rural voices continued to be heard was emphasised.
- The RSN had campaigned that RSG's should be given to all rural areas, as opposed to the top quartile only.
- The importance of ensuring that the entire population could access statutory services was emphasised.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to liaise with Kerry to ensure that the presentation slides were shared with Board Members outside of the meeting.

6 Health Devolution

The Chair welcomed **Michael Wood, Head of Health Economic Partnerships – NHS Confederation**, to the meeting and invited him to present a series of slides to the Board and discuss emerging recommendations from the health and devolution working group.

Members made the following contributions:

- Concerns were raised which related to the lack of engagement and equality between local government and the NHS.
- A concern was raised which related to the diminishing role of councillors throughout the process.

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, confirmed that a draft paper would be submitted to Lead Members of the People & Places Board, City Regions Board and Community Wellbeing Board, and then to the Boards.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

7 Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the report which summarised updates to a research report undertaken by WPI Economics, exploring growth and prosperity and how this could be unlocked through enhancing the roles and responsibilities of local government.

Members made the following contributions:

- The importance of strengthening relationships and communities' involvement and understanding what more local government could do to drive the agenda forward for growth, was emphasised.
- The need to strengthen information related to the future

relationship of businesses within the report was expressed.

- The importance of social value was emphasised.

Officers reported they were in the process of commissioning research which focused on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Future Growth Funding and confirmed that the 'Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity' paper would form part of a suite of documents in this space.

Decision:

- Board Members agreed to the publication of the report.

Appendix A - Attendance

| Position/Role | Councillor | Authority |
|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| Chairman | Cllr Martin Tett | Buckinghamshire Council |
| Vice-Chairman | Cllr Louise McKinlay | Essex County Council |
| | Cllr Caroline Leaver | Devon County Council |
| Deputy-chairman | Cllr Amanda Serjeant | Chesterfield Borough Council |
| | Cllr Emily O'Brien | Lewes District Council |
| Members | Cllr Lisa Brown | Cumberland Council |
| | Cllr Simon Henig CBE | Durham County Council |
| | Cllr Damien Greenhalgh | High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council |
| | Cllr Eddie Reeves | Oxfordshire County Council |
| | Cllr Marc Bayliss | Worcestershire County Council |
| | Cllr Kris Wilson | Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council |
| | Cllr Hilary Carrick | Westmorland and Furness Council |
| | Cllr Colin Noble | Suffolk County Council |
| | Cllr Rachel Bailey | Cheshire East Council |
| | Cllr Jordan Meade | Gravesham Borough Council |
| | Cllr Victoria Wilson | Staffordshire County Council |
| | Cllr Michael Mullaney | Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council |
| | Cllr Alex Wagner | Shropshire Council |
| | Cllr Kevin Etheridge | Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| | Cllr Julian Dean | Shropshire Council |
| Apologies | Cllr Tim Oliver | Surrey County Council |
| | Cllr Emily Smith | Vale of White Horse District Council |
| In Attendance | Cllr Phillip King | Harborough District Council |

Local Enterprise Partnership Integration

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper provides an overview of the background to the current process of Local Enterprise Partnership Integration and sets out the LGA's recently commissioned work in this area, ahead of a presentation by Nick Glover, Director of Local Growth at Henham Strategy.

LGA Plan Theme: Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

Recommendation(s)

That the Board consider the presentation by Henham Strategy and provide a steer on the key messages they would like to see reflected in the projects final report, which will brought to the next board for clearance.

Contact details

Contact officer: Philip Clifford

Position: Senior Adviser

Phone no: 07909 898327

Email: philip.clifford@local.gov.uk

Local Enterprise Partnership Integration

Background

1. On 15 March 2023 the Chancellor announced that Government was 'minded to' withdraw financial support for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from April 2024.
2. Following the announcement, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ran a LEP future funding information gathering exercise and questionnaire on the impacts of its decision to end LEP core funding. Local authorities were encouraged to respond.
3. The previous LGA cross-party City Regions and People and Places Board Chairs, Mayor Marvin Rees and Cllr Kevin Bentley co-wrote a letter responding to the Chancellor's announcement outlining key messages from the sector to inform the information gathering exercise.
4. The letter supported the transfer of functions to drive economic growth and provide greater accountability and visible public leadership. However, it highlighted the need for a swift response to the information gathering exercise, clarity on the integration of these private organisations and their assets into the local government landscape, challenges around recruitment, retention and skills, and the need for a clear statement on how councils would be supported to resolve matters such as Enterprise Zones or Freeports locally to avoid unnecessary delay and greater costs to the public purse.
5. On 4 August 2023 the then-Minister for Levelling Up, Dehenna Davison MP, wrote to the sector confirming Government's decision to end sponsorship and funding of LEPs from April 2024 following the conclusion of the information gathering exercise. The letter stated Government would support local and combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by LEPs and technical guidance was published for the sector to support with the policy change. It also announced Government would provide revenue funding for local and combined authorities in 2024/25 to support them delivering the functions currently delivered by LEPs and further information would be provided in due course.
6. The letter set out that Government expects LEP functions to be exercised by upper tier local authorities (working in collaboration with other upper tier local authorities as appropriate), where they are not already delivered by a combined authority, or in areas where a devolution deal is not yet agreed.

7. Last year, the LGA's cross-party City Regions and People and Places Boards [commissioned support for councils](#) and combined authorities undertaking LEP integration and to share good practice and learning.
8. A series of roundtables with areas at different stages of integration were held between November 2022 and March 2023 and these sessions were also attended by representatives from DLUHC. Most of the research was conducted before the Chancellor stated he was 'minded to' end funding to LEPs from April 2024 and for their functions to be delivered by local government. At the time, most local authorities were still at an early stage in considering the implications of the budget announcement. However, a final learning note was compiled, acting as a practical guideline for areas undertaking LEP integration, including those who would have not expected it to be a short-term priority prior to the March 2023 budget.
9. In recent conversations with LGA Members, officers, and sector bodies such as Chief Economic Development Officers Society (CEDOS), representatives recognised the opportunities that LEP integration brings. However, they also continue to raise concerns around the lack of certainty of long-term funding and future growth hub funding; the need for further detail regarding revenue funding for 2024/25; challenges with capacity in the sector; the need for, and cost of, legal advice; and concerns about the lack of timely guidance on business representation. It was also clear support would be required to facilitate conversations between county councils who would be exercising the functions and their constituent district councils, around joint-working and the most appropriate levels of subsidiarity for different LEP functions.
10. With this in mind, and following a discussion with the Lead Members of the People and Places Board the LGA decided to commission further support for councils, focused on two elements:
 - 10.1. Facilitated discussions for councils and combined authorities taking on the functions currently being delivered by LEPs and a write-up from each session focussing on the process of integration.
 - 10.2. A short final report, drawing on learning from the action learning sets, with recommendations for Government to influence their next steps and thinking.
11. As a result of an open tendering exercise Henham Strategy have been appointed this contract and are currently making good progress. The first stage of their work involves four workshops, scheduled for the following dates:
 - 11.1. Governance, Business Representation and Joint Working (11 January)
 - 11.2. Growth and Career Hubs (18 January)

- 11.3. Freeports and Enterprise Zones (1 February)
- 11.4. Funding, Staffing, Legal and Asset Integration (8 February)
- 12. After each workshop a learning note will be prepared and circulated via the LGA's website, so the key elements of the discussion can be made available to all councils.
- 13. Following the conclusions of the workshop programme a short report will be prepared distilling the key recommendations and challenges arising from the process of LEP integration for use in supporting the LGA's work to influence current and future governments.

Proposal

- 14. Nick Glover, Director of Local Growth at Henham Strategy, will attend the People and Places Board to provide an update on the first two workshop sessions and take soundings from Members with a view to shaping the recommendations to be made to Government.

Implications for Wales

- 15. Local Enterprise Partnerships only exist in England. However, there may be wider lessons for economic development in Wales and LGA officers will make sure to share any emerging points of interest with colleagues via the Welsh LGA.

Financial Implications

- 16. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications

- 17. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report. Bringing LEP Functions under the direct responsibility of local authorities will strengthen democratic accountability and better align these with wider public service provision and local programmes to deliver inclusive and sustainable growth.

Next steps

- 18. Following this meeting, and subject to Members steer, officers will work with Henham Strategy to complete the workshop programme, capture and disseminate the key messages and draft a short final report for consideration and clearance by the People and Places Board.
- 19. Members are asked also to reflect on whether they would like to engage directly with the Government setting out their concerns in this area.

Local Government and Artificial Intelligence

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? Yes

Summary

This report provides an overview of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and discusses their potential use by councils in improving public service delivery and leadership of place.

LGA Plan Theme: Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

Recommendation(s)

That the Board provide an overview of their priorities relating to Artificial Intelligence and a steer to officers on the direction of future policy work in this space.

Contact details

Contact officer: Philip Clifford

Position: Senior Adviser

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Email: philip.clifford@local.gov.uk

Local Government and Artificial Intelligence

Background

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a term used to describe a [contested](#) concept that has recently risen to prominence through the creation and popular adoption of 'free-to-use' software that allows for the rapid generation of [text](#), [images](#), [audio](#) and [video](#).
2. The UK Government [defines AI](#) as: the use of digital technology to create systems capable of performing tasks commonly thought to require intelligence... generally it:
 - 2.1. Involves machines using statistics to find patterns in large amounts of data
 - 2.2. Is the ability to perform repetitive tasks with data without the need for constant human guidance
3. This broad definition can be further divided into [two types of artificial intelligence](#): weak or 'narrow' artificial intelligence, which is a system used to perform specific tasks, and strong artificial intelligence, which is a theoretical form of artificial intelligence possessing self-awareness and the ability to solve problems in a manner like a human.
4. Sitting somewhere between the two extremes of weak and strong artificial intelligence are general purpose artificial intelligence programs, such as [Bard](#), [ChatGPT](#) and [Microsoft Copilot](#). These systems can provide responses to general queries, based on their access to and learning from very large data sets. An example response from ChatGPT when prompted with the question: '*Can you give me an overview of English local government?*' is attached at **Appendix 1**.
5. These systems are [not perfect](#) and can produce false information, so called '[hallucinations](#).' There are also [concerns](#) about the [use of artificial intelligence](#) and [some debate](#) about the extent to which the recent hype around these systems will translate into radically different or profitable business models.
6. An [estimate for the UK Government](#) published in 2021 stated that: around 7 per cent of existing UK jobs could face a high probability of automation over the next 5 years, rising to 18 per cent after 10 years. This report also highlighted research suggesting AI could boost UK GDP by 10 per cent by 2030. However, it has been [claimed](#) that while AI offers the potential for long term transformation, addressing the immediate challenges of capital investment, skills challenges and human resources are likely to provide greater benefits in the short to medium term.

7. For its part, the UK Government's [National AI Strategy](#) and recently published white paper titled [A pro-innovation approach to AI regulation](#) outlines the commitment to make the UK the best place in the world to be a business developing and using AI. Whatever the next few years will hold, it seems reasonable to assume that the application and impact of artificial intelligence will continue to grow.
8. As set out in the [Digital Update](#) provided to the People and Places Board in September 2023 the use of artificial intelligence is also of interest to local government. Work around AI is already taking place at the LGA and in councils up and down the country. To date, work at the LGA has been led by the Innovation and Improvement Board and delivered by the Cyber, Digital and Technology (CDT) Team, drawing on input from the across the LGA's Improvement Directorate, Partners in Care and Health and, to a lesser extent, the Policy Directorate.
9. This work has included: the establishment of a Local Government AI Network; [drafting responses to the Government's AI white paper](#), [a Parliamentary Inquiry into Large Language Models](#) and a consultation on the use of [Predictive Analytics](#); and, the creation of a cross-organisational working group on artificial intelligence. A significant amount of support and advice is also available on the [Advanced and Predictive Analytics Network Knowledge Hub](#), including links to a short briefing on [Generative AI Guidance for Local Authority Leaders](#).
10. A Local Government AI Stocktake Survey is due to be launched imminently and is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the use of artificial intelligence across councils and shape the LGA's support offer in this area.
11. Anecdotal evidence gathered from the Local Government AI Network suggests a wide range of applications and usage frameworks, including: the use of predictive analytics to detect illegal houses of multiple occupation; optimising customer contact centres; supporting work to detect and reduce fraud. Minutes from network meetings held in October and December are attached at **Appendix 2 and Appendix 3** and provide a wider sense of the kinds of discussion taking place by officers in councils.

Proposal

12. As set out above there is clearly a lot going on in this space. The underlying technology of Artificial Intelligence, its application and the regulatory and policy framework that sits around it is likely to continue to evolve at different speeds within different contexts.

13. The People and Places Board has played a leading role in shaping policy relating to digital connectivity and has begun to take steps towards a broader digital agenda, such as last year's work focused on strengthening [digital inclusion](#) and previous work [forecasting the digital skills pipeline](#).
14. Lead members of the Board have expressed significant interest in developing policy recommendations related to Artificial Intelligence and Councillor Jordan Meade has been selected to act as the Boards' Digital Champion, working alongside the LGA's Digital Champion Councillor Mark Hawthorne. While the Improvement and Innovation Board currently leads on issues related to the application of this technology across local government, there remains an opportunity to develop policy and advocacy lines through the People and Places Board.
15. Given this is a rapidly emerging technology and policy agenda it is suggested that members of the Board provide officers with a general sense of their familiarity with the technology, its use in their home council and their overall concerns. Officers will then use this information to map out a programme of work.
16. Some of the questions members might like to consider during this discussion, include:
 - 16.1. To what extent do they feel there is sufficient guidance or clarity from national government about the use of artificial intelligence in the delivery of public services?
 - 16.2. Is there an appetite for establishing some overarching principles around the use of artificial intelligence at a local level?
 - 16.3. Are there any areas, such as a national evaluation of council performance or decisions relating to future growth funding that members believe are not suitable for artificial intelligence?
 - 16.4. How comfortable do members feel in leading conversations with residents and businesses about the impact of artificial intelligence, particularly on vulnerable or marginalised communities?
 - 16.5. What commitments or ambitions would members like to see a new or returning government offer councils in this space?
 - 16.6. How can the People and Places Board leverage its role in shaping the LGA's work in leadership of place to brigade the LGA's other policy boards who might also be considering service-specific work in this area?
 - 16.7. Do members feel sufficiently knowledgeable and train to scrutinise the use of artificial intelligence locally?

17. Subject to members' steer, in the first instance it may be useful to receive a presentation at a future board meeting from a council or officer from the LGA with a perspective on how AI has been adopted locally. Building on this it is suggested that the Board might like to commission a 'gap analysis' on the use of artificial intelligence by local government with a view to making the case to a new or returning government that councils must not be 'left behind' in this space. On the basis that members are likely to support this proposal a session on Artificial Intelligence has been suggested for inclusion at the LGA's Annual Conference in Harrogate.

Implications for Wales

18. Given the emerging nature of this debate, it is currently not known whether there are specific implications for Wales arising from the use of Artificial Intelligence. As this work develops, officers will engage with colleagues from the Welsh LGA to understand whether there are any potential issues.

Financial Implications

19. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications

20. The use of artificial intelligence and machine learning systems raise significant questions relating to equalities. Several of these areas are highlighted above and councils will already be engaged in their own discussions around these issues.

21. The use of artificial intelligence by third-party suppliers of council services and software presents a risk that any bias, such as in a decision-making algorithm, may not be immediately apparent. The LGA has worked with the [Information Commissioner Office](#) to understand some of these issues. [Guidance](#) is also emerging from several other sources.

22. As this work progresses it will be important to continually refresh the Board's understanding of the implications arising from the adoption of this technology. Of relevance will be the need to understand whether the underlying infrastructure needs of less connected areas presents the risk of a capability gap, for example in rural communities.

Next steps

23. Subject to a steer from Members it is proposed that the next meeting of the People and Places Board focuses on a presentation either from a council or a member of the LGA's Cyber, Digital and Technology Team providing a real world example of the issues and opportunities facing local government in the adoption of artificial intelligence. Following this discussion it is suggested that the Board



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may wish to commission research setting out the details of the wider scope to engage government in this area, reflecting the Board's remit around place-based leadership and public service reform.

Appendix 1 – Chat GPT Sample Output



You

Can you give me an overview of English local government?



ChatGPT

Certainly! The local government system in England is complex, with a mix of local authorities responsible for delivering various public services and representing the interests of local communities. Here's an overview of the key components:

1. **County Councils:** These are the top-tier local authorities covering larger geographic areas, such as counties. They are responsible for services like education, social services, transport, planning, and highways.
2. **District Councils (or Borough Councils):** These are the second-tier local authorities, responsible for specific districts or boroughs within a county. Their responsibilities include housing, local planning, waste collection, and environmental health.
3. **Unitary Authorities:** Some areas have a single-tier local authority that combines the functions of both county and district councils. These authorities are responsible for all local government services in their respective areas.
4. **Metropolitan Boroughs:** Found in metropolitan counties like Greater Manchester or West Midlands, these councils are responsible for local services within their borough, similar to district councils.
5. **London Boroughs:** London has its own unique structure with 32 boroughs and the City of London. Each borough has its own council responsible for local services, and there is also the Greater London Authority (GLA) that oversees strategic functions like transport and planning for the entire Greater London area.

6. **Parish and Town Councils:** These are the smallest local authorities, operating at the community level. They exist in rural and urban areas and deal with local issues such as parks, community centers, and street cleaning.
7. **Combined Authorities:** In some regions, multiple local authorities may form a combined authority to coordinate efforts on issues that cross administrative boundaries, such as transportation or economic development.
8. **Police and Crime Commissioners:** Elected individuals responsible for overseeing the police force in a specific area. They work to ensure that the police effectively address local priorities.
9. **Fire and Rescue Authorities:** Responsible for the provision of fire and rescue services in their respective areas. They work to prevent and respond to fires and other emergencies.

Local government in England operates within a framework set by national laws and regulations. The structure and functions of local authorities may vary, and changes can be made through local government reorganization or reforms. The aim of local government is to provide efficient and effective services to meet the needs of local communities and residents.

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Support for care leavers

Purpose of Report

For discussion

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

The Chair of the Local Government Association (LGA), Councillor Shaun Davies, has announced that one of his priorities for 2023-24 is corporate parenting, in particular support for care leavers. Recognising that all councillors are corporate parents to children in care and care leavers, all policy boards are being asked to share their own ideas for this priority area, to shape the LGA's work in relation to supporting care leavers. This report outlines current ideas for this programme and next steps, and is an opportunity for Board members to put forward their own ideas and good practice.

LGA Plan Theme: Putting people first

Recommendation(s)

That the Board comments on the current plans for this programme of work and suggest any additional ideas as to how the LGA can promote positive outcomes for care leavers, including those based on their own councils' work.

Contact details

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Support for care leavers

Background

1. The Chair of the LGA, Councillor Shaun Davies, announced at the LGA Annual Conference that one of his priorities for 2023-24 is corporate parenting, and in particular how the LGA can support improved outcomes for care leavers and others with care experience. This was also discussed at Executive Advisory Board on 20 July 2023.
2. The Children and Young People Board will lead on this work, with regular updates also going to Informal Group Leaders and the Executive Advisory Board for organisation-wide oversight and join-up.
3. All policy boards at the LGA are being asked to consider how services within their remit could improve outcomes for care leavers, including potential policy positions and sharing of good practice. This reflects the fact that all councillors and council officers are corporate parents to children in care and care leavers.
4. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlines the following corporate parenting principles that all local authorities must have regard to when carrying out functions in relation to children in care and care leavers:
 - 4.1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people;
 - 4.2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 - 4.3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 - 4.4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 - 4.5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
 - 4.6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their homes lives, relationships and education or work;
 - 4.7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Outcomes for those with care experience

5. Many people with care experience leave care and go on to happy, fulfilling lives. Care experienced people told the Independent Review of Children's Social Care

that it was important to recognise that, while a lot of policy and media attention is given to the disproportionate numbers of care experienced people who experience negative outcomes, such outcomes are not inevitable and care can be a “positive, transformational and lifesaving experience”¹. For example, there is [evidence](#) that longer-term care can be a protective factor in children’s educational outcomes. One of the aims of the LGA’s campaign is to emphasise a more positive narrative around those with care experience.

6. However, by understanding where those with care experience are more likely to experience negative outcomes than their peers, it is possible to identify opportunities to address these issues. The Care Review highlights several key areas where government, business and society can play a role in supporting care experienced people:
 - 6.1. An estimated 26 per cent of the homeless population have care experience.
 - 6.2. Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of the prison population in England have spent time in care.
 - 6.3. Four in ten (41 per cent) of care leavers aged 19-21 are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12 per cent of all other young people of the same age.
 - 6.4. Adults who spent time in care between 1971-2001 were 70 per cent more likely to die prematurely than those who did not.
 - 6.5. Six per cent of care leavers report having no-one at all to provide emotional support, and nearly one in ten only had support from their leaving care worker.

Current work programme

7. Colleagues across policy, improvement, leadership and communications have been working to develop a programme of work to support the Chair’s priority.
8. Partner organisations are being engaged in this work, including Spectra which runs the Care Leaver Covenant, Become (the national charity for children in care and care leavers) and the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) which connects local authority leaving care teams.
9. Ensuring that the voices of those with care experience directly influence this work is vital to ensure the impact and relevance of the programme. Become and the NLCBF have provided advice on engaging those with care experience, as well as evidence from their own work with care experienced people on key priorities.

¹ [Independent Review of Children’s Social Care 2022](#)

10. Work is being considered across three strands:

- 10.1. The LGA as an employer: including training for all staff, guaranteed interviews where minimum criteria are met for roles (subject to legal advice) and ring-fenced apprenticeship positions.
- 10.2. The LGA as a convener: working with the Care Leaver Covenant to promote their work and encourage sign ups; communications campaign to raise awareness; Work with LAMIT (Local Authorities' Mutual Investment Trust) and CCLA (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities Investment Management) to publicise their work to support care leavers.
- 10.3. The LGA's work to support and improve local government: dedicated outreach and support for care experienced graduates applying to the National Graduate Development Scheme; guidance and case studies for councils; lobbying government in relation to funding for children's social care and to support care leavers who were formerly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; training for councillors and officers on corporate parenting, including across the 'corporate core'.

What care leavers say is important to them

11. The following list has been compiled from a variety of organisations (including the [National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum](#), the [Care Leavers National Movement](#), [Barnardo's](#) and the [Children's Commissioner](#)) that have worked with care leavers to identify key support that they would like to see, noting that young people would like to see support offered to all care leavers, including those who are living outside of their local authority area.

| Issue and asks from care leavers | Examples of good practice |
|---|--|
| <p>Finance: support managing household bills; cold weather allowance; council tax exemptions; savings; higher rate of universal credit for under 25s</p> | <p>Winter fuel payments in Gateshead; paying council tax for those living out of authority in Doncaster</p> |
| <p>Housing: priority access to housing; Staying Put and Staying Close; access to a 'handyman' service and a maintenance fund.</p> | <p>Rent guarantor schemes (e.g. in Devon); home improvements via EQUANS</p> |
| <p>Travel: support with the cost of getting to appointments, work and staying connected with family and friends; driving lessons.</p> | <p>Greater Manchester free bus travel; Cornwall free bus travel; free driving lessons and paid for licenses in Medway; bicycle packages in Reading</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Health: timely access to mental health services; access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services until 25 where necessary to avoid moving into adult support too early; paid-for prescriptions; NHS dentists; optician appointments.</p> | <p>Dedicated mental health worker in Lincolnshire; paid prescriptions in Oldham;</p> |
| <p>Digital connection: devices and access to WiFi and data to connect with health services, apply for jobs and stay connected to friends and family.</p> | <p>TalkTalk free broadband and data for active job seekers; Greater Manchester free data, devices and digital skills training</p> |
| <p>Leisure: gym passes, including for a friend to go with them; funds for leisure activities.</p> | <p>Cornwall Culture Card; free activities in leisure centres in Dudley; Christmas/festival allowance in Cheshire West and Chester</p> |
| <p>Education, employment and training: guaranteed interviews for apprenticeship roles; “work wardrobes”; financial support until a first pay check clears; education bursaries up to the age of 25 (these are currently available for those aged 16-19).</p> | <p>Year-round accommodation at the University of Kent; interview clothing through Smart Works or Suited and Booted; financial support between benefits ending and first wage payment in Cheshire West and Chester;</p> |
| <p>Practical support: starter packs for new homes or going to university; mentoring or buddying schemes; clothing allowance; passports.</p> | <p>Clothing allowances in Kent; setting up home start packs and TV licences in Northamptonshire; coaching for care leavers in Southwark</p> |
| <p>Offers for specific groups of care leavers: including care experienced parents, former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, young people with additional needs, those involved with the criminal justice system and the LGBTQ+ community</p> | <p>Support for care experienced parents in Hertfordshire; building community for former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Leeds;</p> |
| <p>Accessing records: including support through the process.</p> | <p>Access to Records training by the Rees Foundation</p> |
| <p>Post 25 support: to avoid a ‘cliff edge’ or support.</p> | <p>“Always here” support for those with care experience beyond 25 in North Yorkshire</p> |

Issues for the People and Places Board to consider

12. As detailed above, care leavers are more likely to fall out of the education, employment and training system (EET).
13. As corporate parents, councils want to give them the best start possible so they can transition from education to employment. They have specific statutory duties related to young peoples' education and training including the 'September Guarantee' which means they must work with schools and colleges to provide sufficient number of education and training placements for 16-17 year olds, and are also responsible for tracking young people that have fallen out of the education and training system, with many also providing interventions to support them back in. Mayoral authorities have devolved adult education budget which is used to help adults (19+) which includes care leavers to gain qualifications that will move them closer to further learning and work.
14. Many councils have discretionary employment and skills schemes or services in place which can support care leavers. As major local employers, some offer ring-fenced apprenticeships and internships. A care leavers bursary of £3,000 is available for those undertaking apprenticeships payable in instalments over the first year of the apprenticeship, which is administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.
15. The Care Leaver Covenant highlights examples of how other employers are playing their part too offering opportunities to care leavers including guaranteed interviews at [Channel 4](#), application support and guidance at [Metro Bank](#) and mentors and interview practice at [John Lewis](#).
16. However the wider employment and skills system is centralised and complex, making it difficult for councils to bring different interventions together into a coherent offer which provides pathways into further learning or work. Our Work Local campaign sets out a positive vision to addressing this and we are proactively looking to put this on the radar of a returning or incoming government. We can ensure that supporting care leavers is prominent within the next steps of our work.
17. Board members may wish to highlight activity they have in place locally to support care leavers into further learning and work, or indeed any ideas they would like to see the LGA take forward as part of its care leaver work programme.

Implications for Wales

18. Children's social care is devolved in Wales however learning from the programme can be shared with the Welsh Local Government Association.

Financial Implications

19. This programme will be delivered within existing budgets.

Equalities implications

20. This programme is focussed on reducing inequalities for those with care experience.

21. Around one quarter of care leavers are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Specific consideration will be given to how the specific needs of this group are recognised in the programme of work.

Next steps

22. Feedback from the Board today will be taken forward by LGA officers and reported to the Children and Young People Board as part of ongoing oversight of the programme.

Work programme updates

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper provides members with an update of activity across the Board's work programme. Members might like to note the priorities agreed by lead members for the Board's work on strategic housing and transport.

LGA Plan Theme: Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

Recommendation(s)

That the Board notes the updates.

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Work programme updates

Background

1. This paper outlines the work undertaken since the last Board meeting across the Board's work programme. It also shares with members the priorities agreed by lead members for the Board's work on strategic housing and transport.

Strategic housing

2. Lead members discussed the thoughtful and ambitious proposals put forward by members, which covered a wide range of topics. They agreed that the Board's first areas activity will be:
 - 2.1. A review of the role of housing in town centre regeneration in non-metropolitan areas. This will be a timely piece of work given the ongoing challenges for town centres in many areas. There might also be the opportunity to engage DLUHC ministers given their interest in this issue and the announcement of the ten pilot areas for the [High Streets Accelerator Programme](#).
 - 2.2. The role of Homes England and its relationship with councils in the context of devolution and levelling up. This is an opportunity to describe councils' ambitions and help those areas interested in devolution shape their proposals in this area.
3. Officers will develop project proposals and share these with lead members in the first instance.
4. In response to some other proposals raised by members, there are also a number of opportunities to take forward work alongside other LGA Boards:
 - 4.1. Concerns with housing affordability in rural and non-metropolitan areas:
 - 4.1.1. This Board and the City Regions Board will be invited to contribute to work led by the Economy and Resources and Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Boards on support for low income households, including temporary accommodation costs.
 - 4.1.2. The Countryside Charity (CPRE) last month published a [review of rural affordable housing](#). The Board might wish to invite CPRE to present to the Board on the next steps following its publication and the possibility of any joint working in future.

- 4.2. On homelessness, the EEHT Board in its previous Board cycle had signed up to be part of the [Rural Homelessness Counts Coalition](#) hosted by English Rural. We understand that English Rural will be launching some work in early 2024 on rough sleeping in rural areas which will be shared with the People and Places Board for comment.
- 4.3. On pressures from second homes and short term lets: we are waiting for Government's response to two consultations on use class changes and a registration scheme for short term lets. The LINZ and Culture, Tourism and Sport Boards have led the work to date with input from People and Places, and we expect this way of working to continue. At the January meeting of the CTS Board, the DCMS Secretary of State confirmed that the work is continuing and we should 'watch this space.'
- 4.4. On design codes, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has recently launched a [Design Code Practitioners' Network](#).
5. Officers have kept a record of all members' suggestions and will review them with lead members as the work programme progresses.

Strategic transport

6. On strategic transport, lead members agreed:
- 6.1. A project looking at demand-responsive transport including good practice and how it might meet particular gaps in provision such as night-time transport. This should take into account the impact of the rural mobility fund, which is ending shortly.
- 6.2. A review of strategic transport boards: their effectiveness, lessons learned, and good practice.
7. We are working with transport officers to develop project proposals which we will share with lead members in the first instance. Thank you to members who offered to share their experiences; we will follow this up.
8. In addition, members expressed interest in:
- 8.1. (Lack of) rural bus services and their impact on public services and local economies. Issues with bus services are often raised at the Board. The EEHT Board and the Urban Transport Group (previously the Passenger Transport Executive Group, pteg) published a [report in September](#) looking at issues and options for local bus services, including rural areas. The CCN published a [report in the summer](#) on the pressure on county bus networks. This Board, with the City Regions Board and LINZ have commissioned work

on the impact of transport connectivity on skills and employment support; an update is included in at paragraphs 14-16.

- 8.2. An investigation into home to school transport in non-metropolitan areas examining current issues and good practice. ADEPT and ADCS have recently reviewed [home to school transport](#) and made a number of recommendations for reform. Members could invite representatives to the Board to reflect on the particular challenges for non-metropolitan areas and to hear on any progress from the work.

Local economic growth

9. **Growth funding:** The Board, alongside the City Regions Board, has jointly commissioned Athey Consulting to carry out a piece of technical analysis of previous and existing growth funds, identify the benefits and challenges of current methodologies used and lessons learned, and explore an alternative future model of growth funding which provides certainty and flexibility for councils which can be used to influence the next or successor government in their preparation for successor growth funds.
10. Officers have met with DLUHC officials to discuss their early thinking on the capacity and capability elements of the government's funding simplification plan.
11. Following comments from the Board and City Regions Board members, the report 'Devolution First: a five-point plan to support local growth and prosperity' has been signed off. Officers are now preparing for publication and a press launch.
12. The LGA also submitted [evidence on levelling up funding](#) in response to a short-notice request from the Public Accounts Committee.
13. **Local Enterprise Partnerships:** The Board, alongside the City Regions Board, has also commissioned Henham Strategy to develop a series of action learning sets to provide an opportunity for local areas to work through the challenges and opportunities of integration, with the findings published for other areas to benefit too. The findings from this research will be used to support the LGA's lobbying of central government to provide further support to councils and combined authorities with LEP integration.

Skills and employment

14. **Transport and skills:** To build on the People and Places and City Regions Boards' joint work to ensure economic inclusion, we have commissioned

Pragmatix Advisory to examine how the transport system impacts people and places by limiting or enabling access to skills, training, and the labour market.

15. The research aims to illustrate challenges in coastal, rural, and urban areas, as well as groups and communities experiencing disadvantage. The evidence will examine six case study local authorities to show the impact of transport challenges. Each case study area represents one of the six DEFRA rural/urban classifications: East Lindsey, Northumberland, South Staffordshire, Southend-on-Sea, Nottingham, and Lambeth. The common themes emerging from the research so far demonstrate that there are barriers to travel especially challenging for disadvantaged demographics; transport affordability is a problem for many people; reducing the cost of travel opens up choices in education and employment opportunities.
16. The final report will make a set of short- and long-term policy recommendations. Pragmatix Advisory will be invited to present the findings and recommendations to the board in March.
17. **Green Jobs:** The LGA has been supporting Kate Kennally, Chief Executive of Cornwall Council, who is the local government lead on the cross departmental ministerial Green Jobs Delivery Group and the local capacity and capability sub-group. We have been engaging the local government sector such as ADEPT, the Mayoral Combined Authorities network and UK100, as well as representatives of industry, business and training providers, developing recommendations for Government to consider as they draft a green jobs action plan expected after Spring 2024.
18. This has been an opportunity to work with partners and incorporate the principles of Work Local into the recommendations and develop the LGA's [Green Jobs Framework](#). We have engaged members and sought feedback from the City Regions, People & Places and the then EEHT Boards throughout this process during the 2022/23 Board cycle, with lead members of the three Boards providing additional feedback to the final draft of recommendations in December 2023.
19. We are also undertaking research into the role local government can play in supporting local food and drink supply chains. It will identify good practice in ensuring the local food and drink production, retail and tourism is central to delivering jobs and business growth. We are also seeking a supplier to provide additional research to support this work.
20. **Youth Employment UK Commission:** The LGA has been supporting the Youth Employment UK Commission on Level 2 and 3 Pathways for young people. The Commission aims to understand the impact of the Department for Education's decision to remove funding and support for some Level 2 Apprenticeships and for

some Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications, and to propose solutions that will ‘allow all young people to flourish’.

21. Councillor Louise McKinlay along with Councillor Robert Alden from the City Regions Board continue to support the work of the Commission. A number of meetings have taken place between June 2023 and December 2023 and have involved young people, colleges, employers, and experts in youth employment and economics. The commission has also undertaken some ‘deep dives’ into local areas to demonstrate and evidence the impact of reforms on local areas.
22. The Commission is now moving into the final phase of developing short-term and long-term solutions. The LGA is continuing to engage with the Commission to ensure that the sector’s views are reflected in the recommendations.
23. The Commission has agreed that the recommendations should be based on the following principles: a) inclusion, aspiration, appropriate, holistic; b) sufficiency and efficiency; c) equality and quality; d) flexibility; e) integration and clarity; f) clear and stable signalling of the skills value of qualifications. The Commission is due to produce a final report in early 2024 with policy recommendations.
24. **House of Lords Public Services Committee inquiry into the transition from education to employment for young disabled people:** Last year the House of Lords Public Services Committee launched an [inquiry into the transition from education to employment for young disabled people](#).
25. The inquiry aims to examine young disabled people’s experiences of the transition from education to employment. This will include career and employment support and advice young disabled people receive throughout this transition; how far public services demonstrate best practice on employing young disabled people; support for employers; and enforcement of the rights of young disabled people in the workplace.
26. As part of this inquiry, the Committee is examining the role of local government during this transition, for example, the provision of employment support, training, and opportunities, and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). The LGA has been invited to give [written and oral evidence to the Committee](#). We are currently working to source an LGA speaker for the oral session on 7th February 2024.

Devolution and levelling up

27. **Health devolution:** The NHS Confederation, through its Health Economic Partnerships work programme and ICS network, established a time-limited health

and devolution working group. The aim of the group was to understand the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for ICS leaders, how this intersects with English devolution to date and the emerging devolution deals. The Board co-sponsored the group alongside the City Regions and Community Wellbeing Boards. Four meetings took place in April, June, July and September and officers from the LGA and NHS Confederation are finalising the report encapsulating the findings from the working group so that it can be considered by members.

28. **UKSPF Webinar:** In December 2023, Cllr Martin Tett chaired a webinar to share learning from the UKSPF. The webinar received 196 viewers and included the learning from the [commissioned action learning sets](#) from Shared Intelligence, as well as the experiences of combined authorities, district and unitary councils. The webinar particularly focused on partnership working, social value and the delivery of both the People & Skills priority and the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

Digital connectivity

29. The Government's Rural Connectivity Champion, Simon Fell MP was due to attend the Board and provide an update to Members on his priorities. Unfortunately, due to a clash with his new responsibilities for tackling fraud he is no longer able to attend. Officers are working with his office to see if he can come to a future board meeting.
30. **Network switchovers:** We welcomed the recent [Charter](#), agreed by government and telecoms firms, to stop the forced roll out of the switchover in order to protect vulnerable people until adequate protective measures are in place. However, these commitments from Government and industry make no mention of local authorities and the key role they play in supporting and identifying vulnerable people. Our calls were highlighted in a recent [press article](#) featuring a quote from the LGA's Digital Champion, Mark Hawthorne.
31. We have similar concerns about the implications of the 2G/3G switch off in rural areas. There are some geographic areas of the UK that do not yet have 4G coverage, particularly in some rural areas and these communities may be reliant on 2G and 3G coverage for their mobile services. The extent of 2G and 3G coverage varies by mobile network operator. We understand that Vodafone and EE are beginning their switch off this quarter, region by region, and Three will be turning off its 3G estate this year mast by mast. We are concerned that following the 3G switch off, there will be areas experiencing disruption to their services whilst 4G coverage is rolled out, particularly in areas where coverage is already patchy. This is a particular concern for vulnerable residents reliant on 2G and 3G coverage.

32. A lack of communications from industry remains a key challenge, with public awareness levels low, and concerns remain around affordability of new devices. We ran a [survey](#) to understand how prepared the sector is for the 2G/3G switch off, levels of awareness, and support the sector would like from the LGA. It found that almost two-thirds of respondents (63 per cent) said their authority was still using devices and systems that were reliant on 2G and 3G networks to at least a small extent. We are currently in the process of developing an awareness raising campaign on this issue and have been approached by Ofcom who are keen to support our efforts.
33. **Digital exclusion:** The LGA published a report last year looking at the [role of councils tackling digital exclusion](#) which explored the link between various types of disadvantage and the availability and usage of digital infrastructure and the role of councils tackling digital exclusion. The report found there is still some way to go in ensuring every part of the country can have future-proofed, gigabit capable connections, with rural areas lagging in terms of gigabit coverage (47 per cent in rural areas compared with 79 per cent in urban areas).
34. The key recommendations for Government include the need to clarify ministerial and executive leadership on digital inclusion; creating and maintaining a new framework with national-level guidance and resources and tools that support local digital inclusion initiatives; and developing mechanisms for more effective cross-departmental coordination in tackling digital exclusion.
35. The recent [House of Lords Digital Committee report on digital exclusion](#) found the Government does not have a 'credible strategy' on tackling digital exclusion and reinforces our own findings that there is little strategic guidance to councils from Government on closing the digital divide. We welcome [Government's response](#) to the report, in particular the commitment to establish a cross-Whitehall ministerial group, and reference to the LGA's digital inclusion network. However, the response does not go far enough to address the Committee report recommendations and does little to include local government at the heart of tackling digital inclusion. We will continue to campaign on this issue.

Implications for Wales

36. Officers work with all UK Associations to share good practice and learning.

Financial Implications

37. All activity described can be met from the Board's policy budget.

Equalities implications

38. The Board's work programme includes consideration of equalities implications, both explicitly as part of individual projects and throughout all our policy work. We anticipate confirmation of the Board's Equalities Champion shortly.

Next steps

39. Officers will progress work as described above.

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