Safer & Stronger Communities Board

Agenda

Friday, 29 September 2023
12.00 pm

Hybrid Meeting - Victoria Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square and Online

www.local.gov.uk

There will be a meeting of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board at **12.00 pm on Friday, 29 September 2023** Hybrid Meeting - 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 video conference 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:
Abigail Benari
abigail.benari@local.gov.uk | 07789937675

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.

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Local Government Association company number 11177145
Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 0367557
Chairman: Councillor Shaun Davies   **Chief Executive:** Mark Lloyd   **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

Safer & Stronger Communities Board – Membership 2023/24

Click here for accessible information on membership

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (6)	
Cllr Sue Woolley (Deputy Chairman)	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Bill Borrett	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Bobbie Dove	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Priti Joshi	Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
Cllr Liam Bones	North Tyneside Council
Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Simon Bennett	Wolverhampton City
Cllr James Gartside	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Chris Pillai JP	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Labour (7)	
Cllr Afrasiab Anwar (Vice-Chair)	Burnley Borough Council
Cllr Brenda Dacres	Lewisham London Borough
Cllr Anthony Okereke	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Council
Cllr Kelly Middleton	Telford and Wrekin Council
Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Sara Conway	Barnet London Borough
Cllr Kevin Dodds	Gateshead Metropoltian Borough Council
Cllr David Welsh	Coventry City Council
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Heather Kidd MBE (Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
Cllr Jake Short	Sutton London Borough
Independent (2)	
Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Deputy Chair)	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Karen Lucioni	Isle of Wight Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Chidi Nweke	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Matt Edwards	Bradford City Council
Cllr Andrew Walters	Salford City Council
Cllr Mandy Ewings	West Devon Borough Council

Local Government Association

Agenda

Safer & Stronger Communities Board

Friday, 29 September 2023, 12.00 – 2.00pm

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 22 November 2023, 12.00 pm, Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Document is Restricted

Safer and Stronger Communities Board 2023/24 – Terms of Reference, Membership and Appointment to Outside Bodies

Purpose of Report

For information.

Summary

This report sets out how the Safer and Stronger Communities Board operates and how the LGA works to support the objectives and work of its member authorities.

LGA Plan Theme: One politically led organisation

Recommendations

That the Board:

i.   agree its Terms of Reference (Appendix A);
ii. formally notes the membership for 2022/23 (Appendix B);
iii. notes the dates of the future meetings (Appendix C);
iv. reviews and notes the member champions role description (Appendix D); and
v.   note the member champion roles available and register interest with your Lead Member

Contact details

Contact officer: Abigail Benari

Position: Member Services Administrator

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Safer and Stronger Communities Board – Terms of Reference, Membership and Appointment to Outside Bodies

Background

1. The LGA's Boards seek to lead the agenda for local government on the key challenges and issues within their remit and support the overall objectives of the organisation as set out in the LGA Plan 2022–2025.

2. They take an active role in helping to shape the LGA's plan through extensive engagement with councils and oversight of the programmes of work that deliver these strategic priorities.

Terms of reference and membership 2023/24

3. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board's Terms of Reference, Membership and future meetings dates are set out at **Appendixes A, B** and **C** respectively for agreement and noting.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board Lead Members

4. The LGA seeks where possible to work on the basis of consensus across all four groups. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board is politically balanced, and led by the Chair and three Vice/Deputy Chairs, drawn from each of the four political groups. This grouping of members – known as Lead Members – meet in between Board meetings, shape future meeting agendas, provide clearance on time sensitive matters, represent the Board at external events, meetings and in the media, as well as engaging with the wider Board to ensure your views are represented.

5. The Lead Members for 2023/24 are:

    5.1. Cllr Heather Kidd, Chair

    5.2. Cllr Afrasiab Anwar, Vice-Chair

    5.3. Cllr Sue Woolley, Deputy Chair

    5.4. Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Deputy Chair

The Safer and Stronger Communities team

6. The Board is supported by a cross cutting team of LGA officers, with policy colleagues and a designated Member Services Officer being those who you are likely to have regular contact with.

7. The Safer and Stronger Communities team supports the LGA's work on the Board's priorities, and also a number of other issues which are within the Board's remit. The team works with Board Members, the LGA media team and political groups to maintain local government's reputation on community safety issues in the media; conducts our lobbying work (according to Members' steer) in conjunction with the Parliamentary affairs team, and works collaboratively with other Boards across relevant cross cutting policy and improvement issues.

8. The team supports Members in person or by briefing when they represent the LGA on external speaking platforms or at Ministerial or Whitehall events. We will provide briefing notes and/or suggested speaking notes as required in advance of each engagement.

9. The team also participate in a number of officer working groups and programme boards, representing the sector's interests and putting forward the LGA's agreed policy positions.

Communications and Events

10. There are a number of internal and external communications channels available to help the Safer and Stronger Communities Board promote the work it is doing and to seek views from our member authorities.

11. The team arranges regular conferences (currently in webinar format), with the following sessions currently planned and are others likely to be scheduled over the course of the year:

    11.1.   1-2 November 2023: Licensing Leadership Essentials
    11.2.   1-2 November 2023: Fire Leadership Essentials
    11.3.   7 February 2024: Annual Licensing Conference
    11.4.   12-13 March 2024: Annual Fire conference

12. Alongside this, the team arranges training and learning events in partnership with the LGA's improvement team.

13. We also have a dedicated section on the LGA website, monthly e-bulletins, outside speaking engagements and interviews, advisory networks, features and news items in First magazine.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board outside body appointments

14. The LGA benefits from a wide network of member representatives on outside bodies. These appointments are reviewed on an annual basis across the Association to ensure that the aims and objectives of the outside bodies remain pertinent to the LGA and accurately reflect its priorities. Appointments should as far as possible be made in proportion with political representation across the

LGA; as an LGA representative, members appointed to these roles should speak for the Association, and not one particular political Group.

15. The Board is currently represented by members on two outside bodies:

15.1. National Expert Steering Group – Domestic Abuse Act accommodation duty (ministerial group)
15.2. ASB Action Plan Ministerial Oversight Group

Members are invited to express any interest in serving on these two outside bodies to their relevant Lead Member. In due course, there may be similar ministerial groups developed around serious and organised crime and the Victims and Prisoners Bill duty to collaborate.

16. In the event that a Board member is required to represent the LGA on any other outside bodies, officers will liaise with lead members to ensure a nominee from the Board is identified. In these circumstances, Members appointed to represent the LGA on an outside body are asked to provide regular feedback, either through the Board meetings, or alternative mechanisms.

Member Champions

17. The proposed 2023/2024 member champion roles are set out below. These reflect anticipated demand for the Board to be represented at external meetings and speaking engagements. Please submit your interest to your Lead Members outside of the Board meeting:

17.1. Domestic abuse/Violence Against Women and Girls
17.2. Licensing and regulatory services
17.3. Modern slavery
17.4. Water safety
17.5. Anti-social behaviour

18. A role description for member champions is set out at **Appendix D**.

19. As the Board's work programme develops through the year, there will of course be scope to bring in members to specific aspects of this as required and to create new champion roles if needed as work progresses.

Implications for Wales

20. None

Financial Implications

21. There are no substantial financial implications arising directly from this report. Reasonable travel and subsistence costs will be paid by the LGA for expenses

incurred by a member appointee, whilst carrying out a representative role on an outside body on behalf of the LGA.

Equalities implications

22. There are no equalities implications arising from this paper.

Next steps

23. Members to note the content of this report and the proceeding appendices.

Appendix A – Terms of Reference for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board 2023/24

1. The purpose of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board is to provide strategic oversight of all the LGA's policy, regulatory and improvement activity in the promotion of the safety of local communities, including issues of crime and anti–social behaviour, policing, licensing, and emergency planning – in line with LGA priorities. The board will also have strategic oversight of LGA activity in relation to the voluntary and community sector in line with LGA priorities to promote stronger and more inclusive communities.

2. The Board will also have responsibility for LGA activity in relation to fire and rescue authority issues where the issues are of a cross-cutting nature or involve the setting of a new LGA policy. On such matters the Board may choose to seek recommendations or guidance from the Fire Services Management Committee, and from time to time may be requested by the Committee to consider recommendations on such matters.

3. Boards should seek to involve councillors in supporting the delivery of these priorities (through task groups, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), regional networks and other means of wider engagement); essentially operating as the centre of a network connecting to all councils and drawing on the expertise of key advisors from the sector.

4. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board will be responsible for:

   4.1. Ensuring the priorities of councils are fed into the business planning process.

   4.2. Developing a work programme to deliver their brief, covering lobbying, campaigns, research, improvement support in the context of the strategic framework set by Improvement & Innovation Board and events and linking with other boards where appropriate.

   4.3. Sharing good practice and ideas to stimulate innovation and improvement.

   4.4. Representing and lobbying on behalf of the LGA, including making public statements on its areas of responsibility.

   4.5. Building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders.

   4.6. Involving representatives from councils in its work, through task groups, SIGs, regional networks and mechanisms.

   4.7. Responding to specific issues referred to the Board by one or more member councils or groupings of councils.

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5. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board may:

5.1. Appoint members to relevant outside bodies in accordance with the Political Conventions.

5.2. Appoint member champions from the Board to lead on key issues.

Quorum

6. One third of the members, provided that representatives of at least 2 political groups represented on the body are present.

Political Composition

Labour group	7 members
Conservative group	6 members
Liberal Democrat group	3 members
Independent group	2 members

7. Substitute members from each political group may also be appointed.

Frequency

8. Meetings to be held five times per board cycle.

Reporting Accountabilities

9. The LGA Executive Advisory Board (EAB) provides oversight of the Board. The Board may report periodically to the LGA Executive Advisory Board as required and will submit an annual report to EAB at the July meeting.

Appendix B – Safer and Stronger Communities Board Membership 2023/24

Councillor	Authority
Labour (7)	
Cllr Afrasiab Anwar (Vice Chair)	Burnley Borough Council
Cllr Brenda Dacres	London Borough of Lewisham
Cllr Anthony Okereke	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Borough Council
Cllr Kelly Middleton	Telford and Wrekin Council
Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Sara Conway	London Borough of Barnet
Cllr Kevin Dodds	Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr David Welsh	Coventry City Council
Conservatives (6)	
Cllr Sue Woolley (Deputy Chairman)	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Bill Borrett	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Bobbie Dove	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Priti Joshi	Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
Cllr Liam Bones	North Tyneside Council
Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council

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Substitutes	
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Cllr James Gartside	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Chris Pillai JP	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Heather Kidd MBE (Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
Cllr Jake Short	London Borough of Sutton
Independent (2)	
Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Deputy Chair)	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Karen Lucioni	Isle of Wight Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Chidi Nweke	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council
Cllr Matt Edwards	Bradford City Council
Cllr Andrew Walters	Salford City Council
Cllr Mandy Ewings	West Devon Borough Council

Appendix C – List of Future Safer and Stronger Communities Board Meetings for 2023/24

1. Meetings of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board will be held on:

   1.1. Friday 29 September 2023; 12pm – 2pm

   1.2. Wednesday 22 November 2022; 12pm – 2pm

   1.3. Thursday 18 January 2024; 12pm – 2pm

   1.4. Tuesday 19 March 2024; 12pm - 2pm

   1.5. Thursday 13 June 2024; 12pm – 2pm

2. All Board meetings will be held at 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ and online via Microsoft Teams. You are welcome to attend Board meetings in person or virtually.

Appendix D - Board Member Champions Role Description

1. Board member champions, and support member champions, where required, take responsibility for a specified subject area or programme and act as spokesperson. This is in addition to any formal role representing the LGA on outside bodies.

Accountabilities

2. Subject to the role of lead members, to be the main spokesperson for the LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) in relation to a specified subject area or programme, including writing articles and making speeches at appropriate events.

3. To keep abreast of developments locally and nationally in relation to a specified subject area or programme.

4. To attend residential conferences and other events initiated by the board, leading and chairing sessions as required.

5. To engage actively with councils and groupings of councils to secure the views and involvement of the wider membership to inform the board's specific policy line on the specialist subject.

6. To communicate back to the wider membership the work and successes of the board in relation to the specified subject or programme area.

7. To lead/participate in task and finish groups set up to look in more detail at the specific areas of policy.

8. To be the principal representative of the Board on that subject area or programme at meetings with partner bodies and other key decision-makers.

Knowledge and Experience

9. Member champions may be portfolio holders for that policy area in their home authorities or have experience/knowledge of, and special interest and commitment to, the policy area.

Appointment and support

10. The expectation is that the Board will review these roles at the start of the Board cycle every September, along with formal appointments to outside bodies.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board overview and policy priorities 2023/24

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

This paper provides an overview of the issues the board has focused on in recent years, alongside proposals for the Safer and Stronger Communities Board's (SSCB) work programme for 2023/24. The proposals are based on corporate LGA priorities and proposals for broader work based on a continuation of ongoing work (including responding to recent policy announcements by Government) and areas of interest previously indicated by board members.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Board agree the priorities and work programme set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to any agreed amendments.

Contact details

Contact officer: Charles Loft

Position: Senior Adviser

Phone no: 020 7664 3874

Email: charles.loft@local.gov.uk

Safer and Stronger Communities Board overview and policy priorities 2023/24

Background

1. At the first meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (SSCB), members are asked to consider the policy priorities for the work programme for the coming year.

2. This paper provides an overview of the current status of the key issues that the Board's work programme has focused on in recent years, along with the proposed high-level priorities for each of the key thematic work areas for the Board for 2023/24. The work programme takes account of feedback and suggestions provided by Board members.

3. The LGA's 2022-25 business plan identifies four main themes to the LGA's work in promoting local government:

    3.1. a sustainable financial future

    3.2. stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

    3.3. putting people first

    3.4. championing climate change and local environments.

4. Within these priorities are a number of particular relevance to the work of the Board:

    4.1. Continue to highlight the cost pressures on all council services and press for longer term funding that reflects current and future demand for services.

    4.2. Councils and combined authorities have the powers and resources to create the conditions for strong, inclusive local economies and good jobs as part of 'levelling up' the country.

    4.3. Local government has a key role in reducing socioeconomic inequality by increasing opportunity, strengthening communities and safety nets, and promoting long-term financial inclusion and resilience.

    4.4. Councils deliver democratic systems that everyone can engage with, including fair and safe elections and transparent and well-run governance arrangements.

    4.5. Councillors engage in healthy and positive debate and display the highest standards of conduct; abuse and intimidation of councillors and officers is taken seriously by all agencies and appropriate steps are taken to prevent and respond when it occurs.

    4.6. Councils have the appropriate leverage to enable them to deliver their public health and health protection responsibilities.

    4.7. Everyone wants to live in a green and safe local environment. Councils are actively working to address climate change whilst continuing to consider the broader environmental factors which help to make safer more sustainable communities.

5. The Board's work will also reflect the LGA's role in improving and supporting local government as set out in the business plan, in particular through:

    - Provision of Leadership Essentials events

    - Contribution to cross-board work on workforce issues

6. In addition to the themes mentioned above, the Plan adds that the LGA will 'continue to respond to unplanned immediate issues that impact on the sector' such as Grenfell.

7. It is proposed that the SSCB work programme should focus on the following six areas of activity:

   7.1. Community safety

   7.2. Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion

   7.3. Regulatory services and licensing

   7.4. Blue light services and civil resilience

   7.5. Crematoria, funerals, coroners and registrars

   7.6. Voluntary, community and social enterprise

8. The following sections of this report summarise the position in these six areas of activity, while annex one lists details of the proposed work programme for 2023/24.

Community safety

9. Our community safety workstream, incorporates a wide range of issues including anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls and wider serious violence and crime issues, including modern slavery and organised crime. This is an always busy workstream, with several pieces of related legislation brought to Parliament in recent years. The team has also undertaken extensive reactive and proactive work responding to various legislative developments and government initiatives on a range of different community safety issues.

10. Officers have analysed the community safety strategies of 48 community safety partnerships (CSPs) to gauge which issues CSPs are currently prioritising. The 48 CSPs analysed were roughly representative of English councils by authority type, geography and political control. Their priorities are set out in Appendix 2. This suggests that the LGA's existing community safety work is broadly aligned with councils' priorities. The obvious gap in our existing work programme is around substance abuse. The Community Wellbeing Board work focuses around reducing the demand for drugs, while at its last meeting the Board agreed its focus should be on perspective should be reducing crime on the streets, (targeting drug dealers rather than drug users for example) as opposed to public health.

Counter-terrorism, counter-extremism and cohesion

11. This element of the Board's work covers counter-terrorism, including councils' role in delivering elements of the national counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, principally, Prevent (stopping people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism) and Protect (ensuring infrastructure and public places are less vulnerable to attack) – alongside wider efforts to tackle extremism, hate crime and build community cohesion and resilience. These can be particularly sensitive areas of work, and present a range of cross-cutting issues for local government.

12. The Government published its [refreshed counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST,](#) in July 2023, setting out the national threat picture. Alongside the latest Prevent statistics (to year end March 2022), the primary domestic threats continue to come from Islamist terrorism/extremism and the extreme right-wing. The CONTEST strategy also notes that conspiracy theories can act as gateways to radicalised thinking and violence, with

common themes including religious or ethnic superiority, anti-Semitism, misogyny, anti-establishment and anti-LGBT grievances, and that individuals increasingly adopt a mix of ideas from different ideologies into their grievance narratives.

13. An Independent Review of Prevent (IRP) and the Government's response to it, were published in February 2023. The Government accepted all the report's recommendations, almost all of which were of relevance to local authorities, and the Home Office has been working to implement the recommendations since the Spring, including the recent publication of new statutory guidance for specified authorities (including councils) which is expected to come into force at the end of December. Government has committed to reporting on progress with implementation within 12 months.

14. Legislation on a new Protect duty was announced as part of the Queen's speech in May 2022, and in May this year the Government published a Terrorism (Protection of premises) draft Bill, known as Martyn's Law. The Bill proposes introducing a new duty for those responsible for certain publicly accessible premises and events to take measures to review and mitigate against terrorist activity. The HASC published its report on the draft legislation in July, which reflected our concerns, and concluded there was insufficient clarity about the overall objectives of the Bill.

15. Much of our work to support councils in response to and anticipation of future extremism and cohesion issues has been coordinated in partnership with the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE).This LGA-funded programme has been developed to reflect sector need.

16. The LGA responded to Dame Sara Khan's 2022 call for evidence on community cohesion, and we are expecting recommendations to be made to Government over the coming months.

Blue light services, civil resilience and water safety

Resilience

17. We expect to expand our work on resilience this year in response to Emerging lessons form Manchester Arena, Grenfell and Covid inquiries; ongoing national debates around resilience and the balance between community resilience and societal resilience; and the setting up of eight resilience pilots by DLUHC in Northumbria, Cumbria, Greater Manchester; Gloucestershire; London; West Mercia; Suffolk and Thames Valley

Blue light services

18. We are still awaiting the publication of the Government's response to the Fire Reform White paper. The White Paper contained three main themes: People, Professionalism and Governance, all of which have informed, and will continue to inform, the work of the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC). For the forthcoming year it is expected that the Committee will also look more explicitly at culture within the fire and rescue service, following the publication of the Inspectorate's spotlight report into values and culture within the sector, and a number of media stories. Sector led improvement continues to be a priority for the FSMC and we are exploring ways in which to support the sector.

19. Climate change will continue to be of significance to the FSMC. Though the number of wildfires was decreased from last year the challenges posed to the fire sector by extreme weather continue to exist. The LGA will continue to work across the Boards to coordinate activity around climate change.

20. The FSMC meets on 6 October and will agree its priorities at that meeting following discussions with the Fire Commission on 22 September.

Water safety

21. On water safety, we will continue to raise awareness of water safety issues amongst councils and share good practice. We will also support the annual world drowning prevention day campaign.

Regulatory services and licensing

22. The Gambling Act Review White Paper was published in 2023 and contained a number of proposals of interest to councils. Of particular interest was the proposal to enable councils to introduce cumulative impact areas to limit the growth of new gambling premises in areas where there are already clusters. This change requires primary legislation, and we will call on Government to introduce these changes as soon as possible.

23. On taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing, the LGA has for many years called for a comprehensive reform Bill to modernise outdated legislation which hasn't kept pace with developments in the taxi and PHV market. Although the government is in theory committed to introducing a reform bill when Parliamentary time allows, there has to date been no indication that this is likely to happen. Of immediate concern is the fact that the Levelling Up White Paper contained a proposal to consult on transferring control of taxi and PHV licensing to both combined authorities and upper-tier authorities, something SSCB indicated it was firmly opposed to. We will continue to engage with officials at the Department for Transport on their plans for bringing forward this consultation and will respond when it is published.

24. We will continue to engage in a number of initiatives to reduce/avoid burdens falling on councils and improve licensing systems, including our long standing asks for a public health objective and localised licensing fees and managing burdens around any new local authority led licensing regime for cosmetic procedures.

25. Councillor licensing training has been a priority following a House of Lords select committee report that was critical of the operation and decisions of some licensing committees and called for a more consistent approach (as well as to merge planning and licensing committees, although the Government rejected this). During the previous Board cycle, LGA officers developed a new licensing e-learning module and licensing scenario videos to support training, and we will shortly launch a joint licensing committee member training standard alongside the Institute of Licensing to encourage members to use available training materials and demonstrate best practice. We will also run a further licensing leadership essentials course in this Board cycle.

26. The LGA has been warning for several years of the risks to wider regulatory services capacity (specifically environmental health and trading standards) arising from cuts to

local government funding. The prominent role these services played during Covid helped highlight this within Government, although disappointingly the recommendations of the its task and finish group on regulatory services (including for dedicated apprenticeship funding) were not taken forward. LGA and other survey data continues to highlight the challenges in recruiting skilled professionals, as well as the limited pipeline of officers coming through. Environmental Health has been identified by an LGAS-wide workforce capacity project as one of eight local service areas facing the most severe workforce issues and officers are engaged in the LGA's work to highlight this issue. We are continuing to engage with the LGA workforce team and relevant professional bodies to highlight the risks of this issue and need for central funding, as well as to identify what steps councils can take to try to mitigate the issues themselves.

Crematoria, funerals, coroners and registrars

27. The Law Commission is currently in the scoping phase for a project titled 'A Modern Framework for Disposing of the Dead'. The Law Commission states that the legislation governing traditional methods of disposal is "outdated, piecemeal and complex." The scoping phase will consider what issues they will need to cover in the project and terms of reference will be agreed with the Government. The project will seek to create a future-proof legal framework for the disposal of the dead. It is expected that the project will look at the law around burial, cremation, new methods of disposal, and decision-making following death. We will engage with the project as it touches on many issues of interest to councils.

28. We are currently undertaking a survey on public health funerals to inform further work on issues associated with these funerals.

29. We will continue to respond to issues in the media as they arise.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

30. We will be working in partnership with the National Council of Voluntary Organisations to develop a playbook for local government commissioning and procurement teams who work with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners to reflect the changed environment and opportunities after the passage of the Procurement Bill.

31. We aim to develop a good practice guide to support councils in working with VCSE infrastructure organisations to empower smaller and grass-roots VCSE organisations.

Legislation and parliamentary work

32. We will continue our engagement with relevant select committee inquiries as they are announced and with All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) who are active on safer communities issues. We will also seek to lobby around any relevant Bills within the King's Speech due on 7 November.

Conferences, events and media

33. The team will continue its work with the media team to produce a wide variety of media content, reflecting both our key lobbying objectives and the newsworthy issues council's protective services deal with.

Implications for Wales

34. We will work with colleagues at the Welsh LGA to identify areas where our work will be applicable to Wales in terms of non-devolved issues. Where work relates to devolved issues our focus will be on English authorities, with the WLGA leading on work in Wales, but we will share our work with WLGA should they wish to use it as a basis for Welsh specific work of their own.

Financial Implications

35. The work priorities identified for 2023/24 will be delivered within the planned staffing budget, which includes dedicated capacity to support work on cohesion, extremism and Prevent.

36. Additional supporting projects may be commissioned subject to funds being available from a small directorate / team budget.

Equalities implications

37. All board papers are now required to outline the equalities implications of the proposals they put forward, to help embed the equalities approaches the LGA's members are also considering.

38. Officers will therefore consider the equalities aspects of individual elements of the work programme as these are developed. Board members are also encouraged to consider this as an issue they may wish to scrutinise.

Next steps

39. Officers to take forward the work programme as approved by the board, reporting on progress at regular intervals through lead members' meetings and board updates.

Appendix 1 - Proposed SSCB work programme 2023/24

Community safety
Domestic abuse/Violence against women and girls
Continue to support councils on the implementation of their domestic abuse duty (outlined in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) through stakeholder engagement to strengthen relationships between councils and their partners.
Organise a series of workshops and webinars including: Children's commissioner (DLUHC); In-house services/needs assessment (DLUHC); Quality standards (DLUHC) Migrant victims (Home office).
Pursue a joint survey of Domestic Homicide Reviews with the Commissioner's office and a meeting for councils in autumn 2023, with the aim of producing a detailed position paper which could be submitted to a consultation on statutory guidance.
ASB: Work with DLUHC and Home Office officials to support various strands of the Community Safety Partnership Review and implementation of the new ASB action plan as they relate to councils.
Serious Violence: Continue to support councils to implement the new duty, outlined in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.
Influence the planned Victims and Prisoner's Bill duty for councils and local partners to collaborate on commissioning support services for victims.
Reducing Vulnerability: Organise regular council Serious Violence Duty workshops; stakeholder engagement, including the Home Office's working and oversight groups; lobbying the MoJ on the Victim's Bill and further council workshops and stakeholder engagement in relation to the Victim's Bill.
Serious organised crime: Continue to engage with the Home Office and partners on tackling serious and organised crime – continue working with the APCC on any joint work related to the Government's SOC strategy. Continue to attend the steering group on SOC, and support the development of updated guidance on tackling SOC for local partnerships.
Modern Slavery: Continue to run quarterly meetings of the modern slavery network for council officers and provide support and guidance to councils on issues which may arise over the course of the year, such as the rise in modern slavery cases in the care sector. Develop a short piece of guidance outlining why some councils work on modern slavery, and some modern slavery partnerships, are more mature than others.
Continue calling on Government to bring forward a Modern Slavery Bill to clarify in domestic law and the support victims of modern slavery are entitled to, as well as for dedicated funding to support victims of modern slavery.
Sector-led Improvement: Provide good practice case studies on community safety issues.

Drugs and substance misuse: Seek to close the gap in understanding around Combatting Drugs Partnerships, and undertake research on what communities would want to see to help tackle drug use and subsequent crime.
Counter-terrorism, counter-extremism and cohesion
Continue to lobby Government on the importance of retaining investment in measures to prevent extremism and build resilience.
Support councils to implement changes to Prevent duty delivery.
Deliver a programme of support to councils on tackling extremism through the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism.
Provide training for elected members on delivering the Prevent duty, tackling extremism and building cohesion.
Lobby around the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, the Online Safety Bill, Levelling Up Bill and other national initiatives as appropriate to ensure they reflect sector views.
Continue to work with Dame Sara's team and DLUHC as the outcomes of this, and any wider central work on integration, are developed.
Blue light services and civil resilience
Respond to the Government's White Paper proposals around people, professionalism and governance.
Continue to respond to issues around culture within the fire sector, working jointly with other organisations.
Highlight issues around climate change effecting the fire and rescue service, working jointly across the LGA
Support the annual world drowning prevention day campaign and continue to raise awareness of water safety issues.
Exploring the needs of our members in strengthening Local Resilience Forums.
Support and help shape pilots on local resilience work.
Support members and officers to strengthen council activity on resilience, including approaches to community resilience.
Licensing and regulation
Monitor developments with the Gambling Act Review White Paper. Launch our updated guidance on taking a whole council approach to tackling gambling related harms. Update the LGA's councillor handbook on the Gambling Act.
Respond to the consultation on transferring control of taxi and PHV licensing to both combined and upper-tier authorities and maintain engagement with the DfT on this issue.
Continue to make the case for the localisation of alcohol licence fees and press for progress following the Home Office's fee survey to councils earlier in 2023.
Lobby Government around the new cosmetic procedures licensing regime, to ensure action is taken to address staff shortages that exist within regulatory services, that training and new burdens funding is issued to councils, and to

ensure that Government takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to implementing this regime.
Work with the LGA workforce team and professional bodies to make the case for dedicated support to boost regulatory services capacity and the professional pipeline
Continue to lobby Government around proposals to alter the existing central provision of digital licensing forms to ensure an outcome that does not leave councils with an additional burden.
Hold one licensing leadership essentials course per year and deliver the annual licensing conference.
Crematoria, coroners and registrars
Respond to the Law Commission review "A Modern Framework for Disposing of the Dead".
Respond to press and related media work related to the death management processes including crematoria and registrars' service.
Conduct further research into the provision of public health funerals.
Voluntary and community sector
Deliver a programme of support for councils to improve community engagement practices and partnership working with the voluntary and community sector, including a playbook for local commissioning and procurement teams and a good practice guide for councils.

Appendix 2 – Council Community Safety Priorities

1. CSPs are statutorily responsible for identifying local priorities via a strategic assessment and formulating a shared strategy, for reducing crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour), substance misuse and re-offending, for preventing and reducing serious violence and for undertaking domestic homicide reviews (there are also statutory requirements regarding sharing of information and to engage and consult with the community about their priorities and monitoring progress in achieving them).

2. The table below sets out the priorities identified as part of our analysis:

Strategic priority	No. of CSPs (out of 48)
Domestic abuse/Violence against women and girls	40
Anti-social behaviour	38
Substance misuse/related criminality	33
Serious violence	32
Reducing vulnerability	26
Sexual or criminal exploitation	22
Serious and organised crime	22
Hate crime	19
Modern slavery	15
Counter-terrorism/Prevent	15
Cohesion/integration	11
Reducing reoffending	11
Online safety/cybercrime	10
Night-time economy/town centre	9
Reducing inequality	8
Serious acquisitive crime	7
Community engagement	7

Road safety	7
Preventing harm in young people	7
Fear of crime/feeling safe	7
Crime hotspots	6
Burglary	6
Vehicle crime	5
Improving criminal justice outcomes	2
Rural crime	2
Governance	1
COVID recovery	1

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

29 September 2023

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.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Board note and comment on the update.

Contact details

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V2 2023

Update paper

Background

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

Local government and social care ombudsman report into ASB

2. The Local government and social care ombudsman has published a focused report on councils handling of ASB complaints. [Out of order: lessons learnt from ASB complaints](#) sets out a series of common issues in managing complaints, including poor communication and not liaising with other agencies. The report includes scrutiny questions for councillors to consider asking within their authorities.

Martyn's Law

3. At the Board's June meeting, [SSCB members discussed the Terrorism (Protection of premises) draft Bill, known as Martyn's Law](#), which was published in May. Cllr Clive Woodbridge gave evidence on the draft Bill to the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) in June, alongside the LGA's written evidence submission.

4. [The HASC has now published its report on the draft legislation](#), which reflected many of the LGA's concerns, concluding that there was insufficient clarity about the overall objectives of the Bill, and questioning whether the Bill as drafted is an effective response to the nature of the terrorist threat. The Government is expected to respond to the HASC report in early autumn.

CONTEST

5. In July, The Government published its [refreshed counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST,](#) which includes an update on the national threat picture. The strategy judges that risks from terrorism are rising, and notes a more diverse, dynamic and complex threat, including a less predictable domestic terrorist threat, a persistent and evolving threat from Islamist terrorist groups overseas, and advances in technology that provide both opportunity and risk to counter-terrorism efforts.

6. The strategy notes that:
   6.1. the primary domestic terrorist threat comes from Islamist terrorism, which accounts for approximately 67 per cent of attacks since 2018, about three quarters of MI5 caseload and 64 per cent of those in custody for terrorism-connected offences
   6.2. within Islamist terrorism in the UK, explicit affiliation and fixed ideological alignment with any one specific international terrorist organisation is diminishing, with a broader array of fragmented ideological narratives and unconventional belief sets

6.3. the remainder of the UK domestic terrorist threat is driven almost exclusively by Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism (ERWT), which amounts to approximately 22 per cent of attacks since 2018, about a quarter of MI5 caseload and 28 per cent of those in custody for terrorism connected offences

6.4. the threat from ERWT in Western countries is increasingly transnational in terms of radicalising influence, inspiration and communication, and unlike Islamist terrorist groups, extreme right-wing terrorists are not typically organised into formal groups

6.5. Left Wing, Anarchist and Single-Issue Terrorism (LASIT) currently represents a significantly smaller terrorist threat to the UK than Islamist terrorism or ERWT and is not currently present in the UK at any significant scale

6.6. adherence by terrorists to specific ideologies is less structured and coherent than a decade ago, reflecting in part the wide range of material available online

6.7. there is a need to manage a wider spread of narratives and beliefs that may be used to motivate and support terrorist violence, including radicalising influences operating below the terrorism threshold but seeking to encourage others to cross it while fragmenting and dividing communities

6.8. the domestic terrorist threat is dominated by individuals or small groups who may sometimes be inspired or encouraged by organised terrorist groups but are acting without their direction or material support

6.9. conspiracy theories can act as gateways to radicalised thinking and sometimes violence, with common themes include religious or ethnic superiority, antisemitism, misogyny, anti-establishment and anti-LGBT grievances.

7. The strategy goes on to outline measures in response to the threat, with the aim of increasing agility to evolving threats; reducing risk through a more integrated response, and becoming more aligned with international allies. This includes:

7.1. reiterating Government's commitment to implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of Prevent

7.2. gaining royal assent for the Online Safety Bill

7.3. dovetailing work on CONTEST with wider Government work on countering radicalising narratives and behaviours and boosting social cohesion and resilience

7.4. enhancing protective security and attack preparedness through introducing Martyn's Law.

Prevent

8. The Government has published updated draft statutory Prevent duty guidance, following the publication of the Independent Review of Prevent (IRP) earlier this year. Subject to parliamentary agreement, the updated guidance will come into force on 31 December 2023. The guidance aims to deliver on several recommendations of the IRP, making it clear that Prevent's objective is to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, sets out a new 'security threat check' to ensure that Prevent activity is aligned with the national threat picture, and updates terminology to reflect an individual's 'susceptibility' to terrorism (with 'vulnerability' only used where appropriate).

9. Alongside the new statutory guidance, the Government has also published a revised (non-statutory) Prevent duty toolkit to support the delivery of the Prevent duty by local authorities, including examples of good practice in implementing the Prevent duty guidance.

10. A refreshed ministerial oversight board is expected to meet in the coming months to oversee continued implementation of the IPR and ensure delivery remains in line with the review's recommendations.

Pavement licensing

11. The temporary pavement licensing regime has been extended to 30th September 2024. This has been done to allow the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which contains proposals for a permanent pavement licensing regime, to complete its parliamentary stages. A reminder that the LGA successfully lobbied for a higher fee, a longer consultation and determination period, and improved enforcement powers for councils in the permanent regime. Officers will continue to monitor the Bill closely as it completes its final stages and will support councils with its implementation.

Cosmetic procedure licensing regime

12. The Government has launched a consultation on how to make non-surgical cosmetic procedures – including Botox, laser hair removal and dermal fillers – safer for consumers. The responses will shape a new local authority led licensing scheme for practitioners and cosmetic businesses which operate in England. The Government is proposing a three-tiered licensing regime based on risk, with the highest risk (red) tier procedures being regulated by the Care Quality Commission, and the lower risk amber and green procedures being regulated by councils. This first consultation is primarily focused on what tier each procedure should be located in. However, officers will respond and highlight broader points around capacity, funding, training and the need to take a comprehensive approach.

Vaping

13. Following sustained LGA lobbying, we are expecting Government to ban single-use vapes on health and environmental grounds. The Government, like councils, are particularly concerned that the products are often aimed at children, who then become addicted. Further detail will be announced in the coming weeks.

Scams

14. In response to reports of criminals exploiting the digital switchover to scam vulnerable residents who use health care telephony devices, officers have produced a guidance note to raise awareness of the issue amongst councils and offer advice on recommended actions. This was supported by a media release to raise further awareness.

Implications for Wales

15. Officers to work with the Welsh LGA as necessary.

Financial Implications

16. A number of the items within the Update paper may incur additional costs for councils and the LGA will seek to raise these as part of its ongoing work.

Equalities implications

17. To be considered in relation to each individual policy area.

Next steps

18. Officers to continue progressing these issues as required.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

29 September 2023

Clear, Hold, Build

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

The Home Office developed Clear, Hold, Build as a framework for tackling serious and organised crime at a neighbourhood level. Having been tested in eight forces the Home Office is now rolling out the approach in all police forces in England and Wales. Councils are seen as a key partner in the success of Clear, Hold, Build. This report sets out the background to Clear, Hold, Build ahead of a presentation to the Board by Rod McClean, Deputy Director at the Home Office, on the role local authorities can play in the delivery of Clear, Hold, Build.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Board:

(a) **Note the rollout of Clear, Hold, Build to all police forces in England and Wales by 2024; and**

(b) **Agrees the actions set out in paragraph 10 to raise awareness of Clear, Hold, Build among local authorities.**

Contact details

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V2 2023

Clear, Hold, Build

Background

1. The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy published in 2018 highlighted the impact that organised criminal groups (OCGs) have on individuals and communities. It pointed out that serious and organised crime costs the UK at least £37 billion annually, and its victims are often the most vulnerable in society, including young children. The strategy also highlighted the often international nature of serious and organised crime with offenders often operating as part of large networks spanning several countries.

2. As serious and organised crime spans such a wide range of issues, the Strategy also set out an ambition for a whole system approach to tackling it, with a wide range of agencies needed to tackle OCGs. Clear, Hold, Build was designed as a multi-agency partnership tactic by the Home Office to address those areas most blighted by organised crime.

Clear, Hold, Build

3. Clear, Hold, Build (CHB) provides a framework to reduce the number of OCGs, crime levels, serious violence and homicides in high-harm areas, in a sustainable way. It brings together multi-agency disruption tactics and local policing approaches with the objective of reclaiming and rebuilding communities persistently affected by OCGs, and restoring relations between the police and residents as well as other agencies.

4. The framework uses a three phase operating model:

   4.1. **Clear -** ruthlessly pursue OCG members through intensive enforcement activity.

   4.2. **Hold -** immediately address the "vacuum" this leaves as part of the **Hold** phase, by preventing other OCGs from taking over the location including by offering support services and safeguarding referrals.

   4.3. **Build -** strengthen communities' resilience and resistance to criminality in a way that prevents SOC/crime from reoccurring.

CHB Pilots

5. CHB was first piloted in Bradford Moor in West Yorkshire for eight months from May 2021 with encouraging results (see below). During 2022, CHB was expanded to a further seven forces – Bedfordshire, Hampshire, Merseyside, North Wales, Northumbria, South Yorkshire, Suffolk. This initial work has demonstrated that CHB can be applied dynamically to respond to changes in priorities across a number SOC threats. This includes drugs; county lines; modern slavery and human trafficking; and serious violence.

6. The results of the Bradford Moor pilot included:

   6.1. The police, local authorities, charity, and private sector reported improved partnership working and intelligence collation which resulted in a better collective understanding of the threat posed by OCGs in the area.

6.2. The police reported improvements in community confidence and an increase in the number of controlled drugs seized.

6.3. There were also several crime reductions within the pilot site including a 57 per cent reduction in burglary, 27 per cent reduction in drug offences and 38 per cent reduction in antisocial behaviour.

6.4. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recently assessed that West Yorkshire police's response to serious and organised crime was 'outstanding.' Within this assessment, CHB was reported as good practice by the inspectorate with potential to deliver '*long-term positive impacts within communities'.*

6.5. HMICFRS also identified CHB as innovative practice in their recent spotlight report (August 2022) looking at '*The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime-finding time for crime'.*

Expansion of CHB

7. The Home Secretary announced in January 2023 that CHB would be rolled out to every force by March 2024. As at end of September 2023, 16 forces and 25 sites are operational with a further 10 forces expected to have introduced CHB by the end of the calendar year. The national roll out is being assisted by the use of regional serious and organised crime community coordinators and refreshed guidance from the Home Office.

8. Forces involved in the CHB pilots have not received any additional funding. They have however been supported with comprehensive advice on using the approach as well as through independent evaluation and sharing best practice. In the Home Office's view this means that CHB offers a sustainable model for forces and their local partners to use within their existing resources in the long term.

Role of local authorities

9. The Home Office is looking for councils to promote and support the implementation of CHB in their areas as it is introduced in every police force. Rod McLean, Deputy Director at the Serious and Organised Crime Law Enforcement Unit in the Home Office will be attending the Board meeting to explain in more detail how councils can support CHB.

10. The Home Office is keen to raise awareness of CHB among councils as it rolled out in police forces. Members are asked to:

10.1. Agree that the LGA supports the Home Office in raising awareness of CHB among member authorities and the importance of supporting activity to tackle serious and organised crime by:

10.1.1. Working with the Home Office and other stakeholders to identify the key benefits for communities of local authorities playing a role in CHB, as well how addressing serious and organised crime assists councils in a range of responsibilities and functions ranging from safeguarding vulnerable children and adults to licensing.

10.1.2. Developing a series of joint communications from the Home Office and the LGA to local authorities (including to leaders and chief executives).

10.1.3. Contributing to refreshed guidance for local partners on how they can work effectively and efficiently with the police to tackle serious and organised crime, building on the previous LGA guide from 2015: https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/tackling-serious-and-orga-44a.pdf

10.2. Consider what additional support councils will need to assist police forces as they roll out CHB. Members may think it helpful for the LGA to check the Home Office's assumption that CHB can be delivered without the need for additional resources by checking with councils in the eight pilot areas.

Implications for Wales

11. Policing is not a devolved matter with the Home Office retaining responsibility for policing in Wales. One of the CHB pilots was in Wales, and CHB will be rolled out in the remaining Welsh police forces alongside those in England. The Home Office have been discussing the implementation of CHB with the Welsh Government and are keen to engage the WLGA.

Financial Implications

12. The Home Office assumption is that CHB can be introduced within existing resources by police forces and councils.

Equalities implications

13. Serious and organised crime activity can affect any resident, but can often see the more vulnerable targeted by OCGs including those with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act. The public sector equality duty will mean councils will have to consider how working alongside the police to implement CHB may benefit those with protected characteristics under equalities legislation.

Next steps

14. Subject to members' agreement, officers will take forward the actions proposed in paragraph 10.

Document is Restricted

Re-offending and Probation: policy positions re-evaluation

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

The Board's most recent policy positions on re-offending and probation were published in *Going Straight* (2005). These positions have been reviewed and evaluated to ensure they remain relevant in light of developments in the field of reducing re-offending, and support councils' community safety teams in these areas. This report details the progress that has been made on re-evaluation and seeks the Board's agreement to develop a position for the Board around re-offending based around the re-evaluation.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

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Recommendation(s)

That the Board notes:

(a) **The Board's previous policy position on reducing re-offending set out in *Going Straight*, and the review of that position;**

(b) **Provides views on the proposals set out in paragraph 34; and**

(c) **Agrees officers bring back a development position around reducing re-offending for the Board to consider at its next meeting.**

Contact details

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Re-offending and Probation: policy positions re-evaluation

Background

1. The Board's last set out a substantive policy position on the probation system and measures to reduce re-offending in *Going Straight* in 2005.

2. There has not been any specific impetus to re-evaluate our positions on these issues. However, given the length of time since *Going Straight* was published it was felt important the Board's policy positions on this issue were reviewed to ensure they were up-to-date due to their importance to community safety, and particularly considering the substantial changes in the probation system that have taken place in the past 10 years.

3. This report outlines the progress made to date with reviewing and evaluating the position in *Going Straight*, and seeks members' agreement to continue with the review and bring back a policy position for the Board to consider at its next meeting. It covers the key thematic areas laid out in *Going Straight*, and provides an assessment of their continued relevance. It will then lay out the considerations that have been given to *Going Straight's* specific policy asks within these areas – which are listed in the Appendix.

The key factors associated with re-offending in *Going Straight*

4. *Going Straight* identified four key factors that are associated with an increased likelihood of re-offending, and that local government can, or could potentially make a positive contribution to. These positions are concerned with addressing the factors that are generally associated with repeat offending, and which can reduce the frequency with which offenders enter and return to the criminal justice system. They do not therefore, focus on a particular type of re-offending, such as white collar or sexual crimes.

5. The first stage of this re-evaluation has been to compare the factors identified within *Going Straight* and assess how they compare with current best practice and research on the drivers of re-offending. Having assessed the factors associated with reducing re-offending the re-evaluation has examined the policies proposed within *Going Straight* and assessed whether they are similarly relevant, and whether they need to be amended or replaced.

6. *Going Straight* identified the following factors as being significant in reducing re-offending, while the specific policy approaches associated with these factors and designed to ensure offenders do not re-offend are listed in the appendix:

   6.1. **education and employment**: offenders are generally substantially undereducated and have less experience in formal employment than non-offenders. Certain types of formal employment then correlate significantly with a reduced chance of re-offending.

   6.2. **accommodation and housing**: having stable accommodation is known to reduce the chances of re-offending, and homelessness exacerbates existing issues which lead to crime: for example theft out of necessity, and drug and alcohol use.

6.3. **drug and alcohol treatment**: alcohol and drug dependency are higher amongst offenders. This can, amongst other things, undermine an individual's ability to sustain employment and accommodation. Local authorities can fund adult social services and community-initiatives to support treatment and rehabilitation.

6.4. **supporting families**: imprisonment places increased stress and burdens on the families of the imprisoned which can lead to family breakdown and conflict, and in turn exacerbate the likelihood an offender will re-offend.

7. The views of council community safety staff and a number of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations involved in the criminal justice system were sought on whether these factors are an exhaustive summary of the generic factors that are associated with increased rates of re-offending.

8. The response that we received are that the four factors continue to be a fair assessment of the key relevant 'pathways' to re-offending where local authorities can make a proactive contribution.

9. However, *Going Straight* is notably missing a position on **finance, benefits, and debt.** A history of issues with debt affects approximately 48 per cent of prisoners which restricts their ability to secure accommodation, support families, or sustain formal employment.

10. The Board's views are sought on whether the four key factors identified in Going Straight remain relevant and if officers should develop a position on how finance, benefits and debts affect re-offending.

General

11. *Going Straight* sets out two key positions relating to the general organisation and governance of the re-offending/probation system:

11.1. Councils should receive a fully funded and clearly delineated leadership role in co-ordinating the work of local partners in providing support to offenders returning to their communities; and

11.2. There needs to be stronger and clearer communication between partners working in the prisoner and probation system- particularly regarding releases of offenders into local authority areas.

12. We consulted with our Community Safety Advisers Network (CSAN), seeking their views on these positions. CSAN members suggested that these positions continue to be relevant, and that in recent years reducing re-offending has dropped off as a community safety priority, resulting in a lack of coherence over strategic ownership, direction, and accountability for reducing re-offending, particularly for youth re-offending. Some other suggestions were:

12.1. Police and probation should be leading on reoffending strategies and that local authorities should be viewed as partners and providers of services;

12.2. There is a lack of prioritisation for re-offending strategies in CSPs; and

12.3. Partnership working needs to be improved. There needs to be greater alignment, communication, and data sharing, particularly with probation services.

13. Parallel conversations with VCS organisations also raised that those involved in crime will sooner refer themselves to medical establishments before other bodies such as police or local authorities. Under the Serious Violence Duty local health bodies are required to share information with local partners to aid reducing re-offending strategies. However, there continues to be a lack of clarity on what data is required to be shared under this duty, and over any conflicts in medical ethics.

14. In summary our consultations with councils' community safety officers suggested that the following would be of value to local authority community safety teams regarding the general governance and organisation of the re-offending and probation system:

14.1. Greater clarity from government on strategic ownership of reducing re-offending. The government should issue guidance which clearly delineates, in practice, where accountabilities and responsibilities lie within Community Safety Partnerships; and

14.2. Further guidance on the data that is required to be shared under the serious violence duty.

15. The Board's views are sought on whether the policy positions set out in *Going Straight* should be updated to reflect the views from councils' community safety teams set out in paragraph 14.

Education and employment

16. The asks relating to education and employment in *Going Straight* continue to be broadly relevant.

17. Since the publication of *Going Straight*, restorative and reparative justice programmes have become commonplace in Regional Reducing Reoffending Plans (see, for example, London). These programmes continue to be an important part of the criminal justice system, and provides agencies with a low cost, and moderately effective means of reducing re-offending. To this end, the Board may wish to consider advocating their use where possible.

18. There is a more live question around whether local authorities should aim to employ more ex-offenders, which is advocated in *Going Straight.* This is something that forms a principal part of the 'A Smarter Approach to Sentencing' White Paper, which suggests increasing the number of ex-offenders in employment by reducing the period for which offenders have to disclose criminal records for certain offenses.

19. This position has been broadly well received across the VCS, and provides a plausible, actionable way to increase the number of ex-offenders in employment, and therefore reduce re-offending. However, before taking such an approach officers will discuss the current position on employing ex-offenders within the local government workforce with colleagues in Workforce, given issues around for example safeguarding.

Accommodation

20. Officers consulted colleagues working in housing and homelessness on the feasibility of improving accommodation support for ex-offenders and prisoners.

21. The existing positions in *Going Straight* are primarily aimed at improving access to social housing for ex-prisoners, for example, schemes to assist obtaining a social housing tenancy, wider and greater regional cooperation in co-ordinating access to social housing.

22. The wider, extensive challenges that currently exist in relation to social housing mean that these asks are likely to be unproductive.

23. Without a greater supply of social housing, councils will be unable to proactively house ex-offenders in addition to those they already have obligation to house under the priority needs duty – under which the most vulnerable ex-offenders will already be considered.

24. In addition, it is no longer the case that there is a perverse incentive for newly released prisoners to deliberately avoid securing accommodation in order to increase their discharge grant. Further funding is now available for those who secure accommodation on release.

25. Given that councils' ability to more effectively and proactively house ex-offenders is largely contingent on a greater supply in social housing, it is suggested the Board endorses the LGA's wider positions on the supply of social housing set out in 'Council House Building Renaissance'.

26. Housing colleagues also emphasised that action across Whitehall to prevent and reduce easily preventable homelessness – for example, the recent restrictions on Friday releases – would assist ex-offenders. Changing release dates would ease the burden on local authorities and allow them to more proactively and effectively meet the housing needs of ex-offenders and those in the probation system.

27. The 13-week benefit rule has also changed since *Going Straight's* publication. Now, claimants can claim housing benefit for up to 52 weeks if the reason for their absence fits a certain criteria, including short-term prison sentences, which was the primary focus of *Going Straight*.

Drug and alcohol treatment

28. Members should note that the Ministry of Justice's 'A Smarter Approach to Sentencing' White Paper states that the government will increase the usage of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements, which suggests that the community-based approach to drug and alcohol treatment advocated in *Going Straight* remains credible.

29. There has been a low rate of response from colleagues on specific ways in which the position in this area needs revision. It was suggested that there needs to be clearly outlined expectations regarding the support that the Probation Service expect from commissioned substance misuse services to deliver community treatment orders.

30. Officers invite members to consider whether further work is needed in this area, including conducting further research.

Supporting families

31. *Going Straight's* policy positions on 'supporting families' fit within an early intervention and prevention approach, since they are predicated on the premise that certain demographics and experiences (in this case, having a parent or carer in prison) are associated with an increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system later in life, and that early intervention in these cases can prevent this escalation.

32. This is certainly an important consideration in reducing re-offending, and an area where local authorities are well positioned to make valued, positive contributions to residents.

33. However, this support of support and early intervention crosses over into the remit of other LGA Boards, and the Board may wish to consider whether further work should be undertaken for example with the Children and Young People's Board to develop positions that support the families of offenders and ensure more of a focus on early intervention and prevention to reduce offending as well as re-offending.

Summary of proposals

34. That the Board:

   34.1. Indicate whether the four key factors identified in Going Straight remain relevant and if officers should develop a position on how finance, benefits and debts affect re-offending.

   34.2. Considers whether the policy positions set out in *Going Straight* should be updated to reflect the views from councils' community safety teams:

      34.2.1. That it would assist to have greater clarity from government on strategic ownership of reducing re-offending. The government should issue guidance which clearly delineates, in practice, where accountabilities and responsibilities lie within Community Safety Partnerships; and

      34.2.2. Further guidance should be provided on the data that is required to be shared under the serious violence duty.

   34.3. Directs officers on whether to conduct further research on what safeguards and caveats would be necessary in order for the LGA to advocate for local authorities to recruit more ex-offenders as a means of reducing re-offending.

   34.4. Endorses the LGA's wider positions on the supply of social housing as the means to ensure ex-offenders have access to the accommodation they require, and that the LGA should lobby for a change in release dates to enable local authorities and partners to provide better support to offenders as they leave prison.

   34.5. Reflects on whether further work is needed around the provision of drug and alcohol treatment for ex-offenders.

   34.6. Consider whether the Board should work with other LGA Boards to develop positions on the support to families of ex-offenders, and approaches that deliver better early intervention and prevention to reduce offending and re-offending.

34.7.Express any policy or thematic areas that they believe should be researched further as part of this re-evaluation.

Implications for Wales

35. As part of the next stages of the review work officers will engage the WLGA to check what extent, if any, it would be helpful for the final positions agreed by the Board to reflect practice and circumstances in Wales.

Financial Implications

36. This work will be resourced from within the existing work programme for the Board.

Equalities implications

37. Re-offending and probation are policy areas which necessarily deal with vulnerable and often marginalised residents. Therefore, any equalities implications will be considered throughout this re-evaluation.

Next steps

38. Officers will use members' views to develop an updated policy position for the Board on reducing re-offending continue to proceed with agreed programme of work and research avenues, as directed by members.

Appendix 1

Policy positions in *Going Straight*

Education and employment:

1. Local authorities can produce adult educational programmes as well as providing cultural and recreational facilities.

2. Local authorities are themselves significant employers and should provide training, work experience, or employment opportunities to ex-offenders; they can also encourage other employers to do so through development and regeneration programmes.

3. Councils are well placed to support partners to provide employment and training due to their knowledge of local labour markets.

4. Those on community sentences and certain types of custodial sentence could be brought into regeneration programmes as part of local restorative justice/reparation strategies.

5. Councils should review existing patterns of adult and vocational training courses-namely moving away from courses running primarily from September to June to rolling entries to reflect varying release dates.

Accommodation:

1. Conduct 'housing with offender rehabilitation support' pilots (housing schemes with built in rehabilitation programmes which if completed result in assistance getting social housing tenancy).

2. Housing authorities need to 'think positively about the priority to be attached to ex-offenders housing needs' - i.e. consider housing re-offenders as a housing strategic priority, in addition to being part of authorities' considerations under Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

3. Housing authorities should work 'proactively' with prisons to provide housing support to prisoners in advance of release.

4. Scrap the 13-week housing benefit rule- that you cease to be eligible for housing benefit if you are absent from your home for over 13-weeks – to ensure that tenancies can be sustained for short-term prison sentences.

5. Prisoners are often incarcerated far from their local community, which can present obstacles to their rehabilitation and re-integration. Principally, prisoners should not be unnecessarily moved far away from their communities, and there should be greater communication from the Prison and Probation services to local agencies about prisoners' impending release.

Drug and Alcohol Treatment

1. AHRS and drug strategies need to be better integrated as well as stronger linkages with wider public health bodies.

2. Local authorities, by virtue of the adult social services community care purchasing arrangements, can fund a major part of residential drug and alcohol treatment where the NHS and probation service won't.

Supporting families

1. Tailored services to children of offenders.

2. Authorities use their health scrutiny function to ensure families of prisoners are effectively supported.

3. Authorities should provide parenting, and anger management programmes within families that compliment those in prison.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

29 September 2023

Future Crime Horizon Scan

Purpose of Report

For decision.

Summary

This report reviews some of the key qualitative and quantitative trends in crime that councils' community safety teams are likely to see in the next 5-10 years as a result of developments in artificial intelligence (AI). It also sets out some case studies on how local authorities are already responding to these changes. Finally, it proposes, subject to the direction of members a work programme to support the local government sector to manage these trends.

LGA Plan Theme: **Championing climate change and local environments**

Recommendation(s)

That the Board:

(a) **Note the potential for AI to shape and change the way crime is committed, and the impact this could have on councils' community safety work; and**

(b) **Agree to the proposed work programme set out at paragraph 33, and provide a steer in relation to the points set out in paragraphs 34 and 35.**

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V2 2023

Future Crime Horizon Scan

Background

1. Changes in technology over the last thirty years have seen the emergence of new types of crime. Board members will be familiar with the rapid rise in cybercrime created by the digitalisation of many areas of life. Technological developments in for example nanotechnology, robotics and cybernetics are likely to create further crime opportunities.

2. The relationship between technological innovation and crime seems to follow a three phase pattern with; development without much consideration of the impact on crime; the exploitation of the new technology by criminals; and then a response by government and bodies involved in tackling crime. It is therefore not a question of whether technological developments will be exploited by criminals, but a case of when that happens and how.

3. The latest data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales which is conducted by the Office of National Statistics and covers the period until the end of March 2023 listed fraud as the largest crime type with 3.5 million incidents or offences. This was relatively stable compared to the period immediately before Covid-19, but over 2 million of these offences related to bank and credit account fraud, though advanced fee fraud is increasing.

4. Given the impact technological developments will have on crime, the Board may wish to consider whether it examines the impact of a range of different technological developments on crime in its work programme. This paper though considers the impact of the development and prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI). Please see the Appendix for relevant definitions and key terminology related to AI.

5. This report provides members with an overview of what academic and other research suggests will be the emergent trends in crime as a result of AI in the next 5-10 years. It is organised by qualitative factors - how crime might change as a practice; and quantitative factors - how certain crimes may increase.

6. These trends are not mutually exclusive and often closely related, but it is important to draw a distinction between, for example, utilising AI as an accessory to an otherwise common crime, such as theft, and crimes which legal and regulatory systems do not currently have a clear approach to, such as political audio-visual impersonation.

7. Then it provides case studies of how local authorities and other public sector bodies are managing these trends and what lessons can be drawn from them.

Qualitative changes: how might crime change?

8. As members will likely appreciate, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to commit crime could represent a substantial qualitative shift in how certain crimes will look in the near future. In reviewing the relevant academic and third sector literature, the following emerged as the primary, and most salient ways in which AI is likely to shape how crime looks in the future, based on likelihood of prevalence and difficulty in prevention:

9. **Audio-visual impersonation:** the use of artificial intelligence to accurately impersonate another person on video and or audio for the purposes of committing a crime. This could be used in a wide range of ways from for example defrauding the vulnerable to partner abuse. This is understood as a qualitative change because it could be deployed to conduct a large range of crimes including for example blackmail, theft, and undermining community cohesion.

10. Developments in deep learning (see the Appendix for a definition) have meant that audio-visual impersonation can be highly sophisticated and can be proliferated through a large number of difficult to regulate domains, such as social media. There is currently research into algorithmically detecting audio-visual impersonation (sometimes referred to as deep fakes), but these are not currently highly sophisticated or widely available.

11. This is of particular concern to local authorities since they are often the interface for vulnerable residents to access services which may be of interest to criminals – such as the provision of benefits. Trusted figures from local authorities may therefore be the target of audio-visual impersonation in the commission of theft or extortion.

12. **A distinct but related trend is the use of large language models to improve the efficacy of phishing** – an already common process whereby a party aims to collect secure information, such as bank details, through installing malware while impersonating a trusted party. A local authority is a likely target of this impersonation as they communicate not only with vulnerable residents, but also the wider community for example around the collection of council tax, and the provision of wide-ranging services.

13. As members are likely to be aware, the majority of phishing scams are currently unsophisticated, and rely on indiscriminately circulating crude messages which capitalise in simple human error, particularly by the elderly and vulnerable.

14. The increased sophistication of language models and natural language processing means that this is likely to change. Criminals could utilise these capabilities to produce messages which are both highly targeted and extremely difficult to distinguish from legitimate communications.

15. This is of particular concern due to the difficulty of defeating such systems. Phishing scammers are able to experiment with the efficacy of various messages at virtually no cost, and large language models – such as ChatGPT – are already highly sophisticated and can replicate messages that are indistinguishable from legitimate parties. Further, phishing relies on human error, which means it is likely to increase in use as these scams become more sophisticated.

16. **Terrorism:** the use of artificial intelligence for the purposes of making more effective the delivery of a terror attack, or the radicalisation and co-ordination of terrorists.

17. The relevant horizon-scans have raised particular concern about the possibility of driverless vehicles being utilised as weapons. This would serve to proliferate vehicular terrorism by reducing the need for driver recruitment, enabling lone actor attacks, and potentially co-ordinating a large number of vehicles at once.

18. As drones become more technologically sophisticated, there is a high possibility that these are used for terroristic purposes- such as the deployment of explosives without the need for an operator in close proximity. It is also currently being evaluated by actors such as the United States military, who are considering how AI can be used to improve drone targeting systems and minimise the need for human input.

19. These developments do, however, have substantial implications for legislation of importance to local authorities- such as Martyn's Law or the 'Protect Duty'. Once this legislation is introduced councils will need to have a strong working understanding of these emergent risks in order to ensure they are complying with their obligations under this duty.

20. The Board has received presentations in the past from the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA), which is the technical government body chiefly concerned with physical and protective security. Members may wish to consider whether they would benefit from a further presentation from the NPSA about how local authorities can best prepare for these expected changes in how terror attacks are conducted.

21. In addition to the material risk posed by the use of AI systems to conduct terror attacks, the rise in audio-visual impersonation may also serve to increase radicalisation through both creating deceptive and incendiary content, as well as targeting it more effectively.

22. The LGA's Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) has been considering how artificial intelligence is currently being utilised for the purposes of spreading misinformation and encouraging radicalisation, and has been looking at conducting a practitioner roundtable on this topic. It would be helpful to have members' views on what this roundtable might cover, and what further work in this area should be undertaken going forward.

23. These qualitative changes to crime brought on by the increased sophistication of artificial intelligence is by no means exhaustive, and Board members may wish to raise other changes that could arise from the use of AI in carrying out criminal activity.

Quantitative changes: how might the prevalence of certain crimes change?

24. The 2022 Interpol Global Crime Trend Report summarises perceptions of crime types across Europe that currently post a substantial threat and are likely to increase in the near future, primarily through digitalisation:

    24.1. **Organised crime:** the use of legitimate business technologies, and potentially local authorities, as a vehicle for organised crime.

        24.1.1. The LGA already has research and resources dedicated to understanding and combatting the risk of organised crime to local authorities. See, for example, Local Authority Serious and Organised Crime Checklist and the Counter Fraud Hub.

    24.2. **Illicit trafficking:** the use of digital and online recruitment for targeting victims, and information distribution.

24.2.1. This is expected to increase in both conventional forms, such as the production and distribution of illicit drugs, as well as new emerging forms of human trafficking, particularly relating to the proliferation of certain forms of pornography such as OnlyFans. High profile cases such as that of [Andrew Tate](#) have illustrated how such digital platforms can be utilised to facilitate complex forms of human trafficking.

24.3. **Financial Crime and Corruption:** the use of online and digital tools to perpetrate financial crime more effectively.

24.3.1. A range of these crimes would fall under a conventional understanding of financial crime: such as AI-assisted identity fraud, or the increased vulnerability of financial systems which operate within a single application.

24.3.2. However, a distinct trend within financial crime is criminal responses to the introduction of new regulations and national policy objectives (such as those with an environmental objective) for example, the creation of [fraudulent carbon capture/offset technologies.](#)

24.4. **Cybercrimes:** the growth in prevalence and sophistication of conventional online scams and ransomware.

24.5. **Terrorism:** similarly to those outlined in the previous section, with particular attention to the use of the internet for the purposes of radicalisation.

Case Studies

25. As well as offering greater opportunities for criminals, AI offers local authorities opportunities to address widespread criminal activity in their areas, such as tackling fly-tipping. For example:

25.1. [Birmingham City Council](#) has deployed cameras in fly-tipping that are capable of automatically detecting incidences of fly-tipping and reporting this to the Council. These were funded by a £45,000 grant from central government to combat fly-tipping. Importantly, these were supplemented by more conventional ward engagements such as posters and written communications.

25.2. Westminster City Council is trialling a similar system which will also report registration plates.

25.3. Utilising AI in surveillance and predictive policing more broadly is one of the key active trends in AI, particularly for cities and local authorities.

25.4. Such systems are technically simple and inexpensive and remove the need for operators to manually observe potentially hours of recorded footage of reported fly-tipping.

25.5. Unlike other uses of AI, these systems are also not significantly legally or ethically problematic, since the data that it is learning from and analysing is environmental data, which carries far less legal or ethical implications than personal data.

25.6. These case studies therefore reported a high degree of success, with little technical or ethical difficulties.

26. Use of AI systems and algorithms to assist decision-making on benefit claims and welfare issues.

26.1. The lack of legal and ethical difficulties associated with AI-assisted fly-tipping detection contrasts clearly with attempts by some local authorities to improve their decision-making capabilities and capacity in assessing welfare claimants.

26.2. These attempts were ultimately scrapped following a number of serious concerns which included: simple inaccuracies, demographic biases, and a lack of transparency and 'explainability'.

26.3. The problematic nature of this case study primarily originates in the substantial legal and ethical considerations that arise from the use of personal data in contrast to environmental data.

27. These case studies on uses of AI within a broad community safety context illustrates the legal, technical, and ethical issues associated with AI which local authorities need to address, as well as the need for councils to have a clear understanding of where AI might have utility and where it might not.

Key considerations for local authorities

28. These trends highlight a number of key considerations that councils should be making to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the identified trends.

Being prepared for risks

29. A number of these trends capitalise on information and technology for which there is not a high degree of literacy and awareness in the general public. Similarly, many of these trends – for example the use of driverless vehicles for terrorism – have not yet materialised. This positions local authorities at an intersection where the most productive response will be to ensure that they themselves highly literate in these technologies and therefore aware of their risks, in order to both educate residents and respond to threats as they emerge.

30. Going forward it will be important for councils to be able to access to the technical expertise to prepare for new types of crime and new ways in which existing crime may be committed, and support residents to minimise their likelihood of being victims of crime.

Ethical considerations

31. In order to respond to crimes committed with the assistance of AI, and also to use AI to strengthen their own community safety response local authorities need a clear understanding of the ethical issues associated the use and abuse of AI.

Data protection

32. As members are aware from previous NPSA briefings local authorities are controllers of substantial amounts of often personal and sensitive data and could be targeted through AI systems. The LGA's cyber, digital and technology programme assists councils in improving the secure use of digital technology.

Proposal

33. In order to place councils in a better position to respond to the impact of AI on crime over the next five years, it is proposed a programme of work is developed for the Board covering:

    33.1. Raising awareness among councils of the potential criminal use of AI in the near future for example through webinars, Leadership essential course and collaboration with the LGA's cyber, digital and technology programme.

    33.2. Undertake further research on how councils and community safety partners might use AI to address crime and community safety issues.

    33.3. Sharing emerging practice in councils and from other sectors, including in addressing the ethical and legal issues related to combatting crime facilitated by AI, and also in the use of

34. It would also be helpful to have a steer from members on what could be covered at the planned SIGCE practitioners' roundtable on the use of AI for the purposes of spreading misinformation and radicalisation.

35. Members views are also sought on whether the Board should explore other emerging technological developments which could be used to carry out crime.

Implications for Wales

36. There are no specific implications for Welsh councils but we will engage with colleagues at the WLGA to see if the work proposed in this paper would assist Welsh local authorities.

Financial Implications

37. There are no financial implications from the Board arising from the proposed actions.

Equalities implications

38. Any research that Officers conduct regarding the use of artificial intelligence in community safety teams must ensure that they are paying adequate attention to the known equalities implications of such systems- for example, the ability of these systems to learn prejudices and biases.

Next steps

39. Subject to members' agreement officers will develop the programme of work set out at paragraph 33.

Appendix 1

Key terminology

Artificial Intelligence: 'an umbrella term covering a wide range of efforts to computationally reproduce complex human capabilities such as language use, vision and autonomous action.'(Caldwell et al. 2020). Most AI as we understand it describes a system which integrates a number of these capabilities into a single system which significantly outperforms that of human capabilities.

Machine learning (ML): what most would understand as a 'bottom-up' subset of AI. ML describes AI methods based on algorithms which discover and replicate patterns in data; decision criteria are therefore learned as more data is fed into them. This makes them by design, unpredictable and dynamic systems. Distinctions within ML:

- **Supervised and unsupervised learning:** systems which are, or are not explicitly told correct answers (labels)
- **Training data:** the data that an ML system learns its task and relevant patterns from- the purpose of training data is to ensure that an ML system can go on to generalise and interpret new, unseen data.
- **Deep learning:** ML that makes use of large complex, interconnected network of simple computational units connected together. Each unit usually performs a simple computational task which is then integrated with other units to create a complex system.
- **Reinforcement learning:** an ML approach whereby an autonomous software agent can perform actions on a system with the intention of maximising a particular goal or reward
- **Natural Language Processing:** AI applied to understanding, generating, and translating human language.

Bias: bias is a topic ethical issue in AI, whereby a system incorrectly learns based on flaws in real world data which may, for example, reflect systemic, social, or economic biases.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

The identification, remediation, and management of RAAC has been subject to substantial public and media concern in recent weeks, following the Department for Education's change in approach to managing the risks associated with RAAC. This paper sets out a brief background to the LGA's work on RAAC, recent developments, and the current key areas of interest to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, and seeks member's views on the LGA's next steps.

LGA Plan Theme: **Championing climate change and local environments**

Recommendation(s)

That the Board notes:

(a) **Recent developments relating to the identification, remediation, and management of RAAC; and**

(b) **Provide views on the LGA's next steps in its work related to RAAC.**

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Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) update

Background

1. As members from the Board will recall from their discussion in January about the LGA's strategy to raise awareness of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) among councils, it is a lightweight, aerated ('bubbly') concrete that was commonly used by municipal architects from the 1950s until the mid-1990s, though there have been cases dating back to the 1930s and some into the 1990s.

2. It was predominantly used in precast panels, which are primarily found in flat-roof construction, but have been found less frequently in pitched-roofs, walls, and floors. It is also found more commonly in buildings with large open spaces.

3. RAAC is found in a range of private and public buildings. It is currently thought to be most prevalent in the school estate, but has been found in a number of local authority-owned settings including theatres, libraries, leisure centres and sports pavilions as well as in a small amount of social housing. As such it is a topic of interest to a number of LGA Boards.

4. It has also been found in the police estate in Devon and Cornwall (including the police station in Barnstaple) and in Scotland, in the National Health Service where it has been found at 27 sites including seven hospitals which will require full replacement, and in fire stations in Scotland. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that in a local authority context where it has been used in one type of building, such as schools, it may also be present in other local authority owned premises. It is unclear how often it has been used in private and commercial buildings.

5. The risks associated with RAAC have been known since the 1990s, where the Building Research Establishment (BRE) commented on issues identified with RAAC planks, including progressive and excessive deflections in their surface associated with extensive hairline cracking and corrosion of reinforcements. Importantly, it was *previously* thought that RAAC planks would give sufficient warning of failure through visual deterioration. A number of notable incidences of RAAC failure- such as, collapses of school roofs- contradicted this understanding. These incidents have suggested that RAAC planks can collapse with little to no visual warning, and therefore that RAAC is a clear and present risk.

6. Since 2018, the LGA has done substantial work to spread awareness on the risks presented by RAAC, which can be found on the LGA's RAAC webpage.

7. In 2022, the Department of Education (DfE) started a survey of all schools to raise awareness of RAAC. Responsible bodies, including local authorities, were required to register their schools with DfE, indicate whether they had checked for RAAC, and whether they had discovered any incidences of it.

8. We worked continuously with the DfE to raise awareness of this survey by cascading it to members, and provided targeted support to those who were having difficulties completing it.

9. This was done concurrently with a number of activities aimed at raising awareness of the risks of RAAC, such as Leadership Essentials courses, webinars, and circulating relevant policy and news developments.

10. We similarly engaged frequently with members councils that had dealt extensively with RAAC in order to gain a fuller understanding of its extent, and any costs or issues associated with its management and remediation.

Recent developments

11. Members are likely to be aware of the substantial public and media attention that is currently being given to the identification, remediation, and risk management of RAAC – particularly in the school estate.

12. DfE's advice to schools changed at the end of August due to three incidents over the summer involving the collapse of RAAC structures without prior warning: two in schools settings and one in a commercial setting. The view of DfE officials was that under previous DfE guidance, as well as the current RAAC guidance from the Institution of Structural Engineers, the planks that collapsed would have been categorised as non-critical and therefore not requiring immediate evacuation. This has led to a shift in DfE's risk management approach whereby any incident of RAAC in a state-funded education setting (community, voluntary-controlled, foundation schools and maintained nursery schools) must be taken out of use until appropriate mitigations are put in place.

13. DfE has put in place a process to support schools where it is suspected there is RAAC present, including access to technical expertise to confirm whether or not there is RAAC present. There is funding available to schools to cover the revenue and capital costs of taking buildings with RAAC out of use and remediating them.

14. Since the DfE announcement there has been nationwide activity to identify RAAC in the public estate. The LGA has drawn local authorities' attention to the guidance available to assist them in checking whether their estates have RAAC, and this has led to the identification of RAAC in a range of local authority sites outside the school estate.

15. In order to provide member authorities with appropriate support and guidance, we have created a RAAC specific e-mail inbox (raac@local.gov.uk) where local authorities can raise issues they are encountering in managing RAAC in their estates.

Issues

16. **Guidance:** The Institute of Structural Engineers are presently reviewing their guidance in light of the three incidents that prompted a change of approach by the DfE. This review process is expected to be completed shortly. For the moment government departments are keen to stress that the Institute of Structural Engineers' guidance should be considered technically sound.

17. In response to the change in approach from the DfE, the LGA is currently producing an advice note for local authorities which sets out the guidance from the Institute of Structural Engineers and from government on identifying and managing cases of RAAC,

including key background information, risk profiles. This advice note will be published on the LGA's website in due course.

18. The LGA also sits on and represents the local government sector in the Office for Government Property's (OGP) RAAC Working Group. This is the cross-Whitehall group established to coordinate the approach across government departments to identifying and remediating RAAC, as well as creating a collective understanding and approach to RAAC across the public sector estate. In addition the LGA has been invited to participate in the Construction Leadership Council RAAC Industry Response Group which brings together leading organisations and individuals in the construction sector and academia to coordinate activity, share knowledge and experience and make recommendations to government.

19. Local authorities have raised a number of questions on which it would be helpful to have further guidance from government:

    19.1. In particular they have asked for clarity over the approach to be taken where RAAC is suspected as being present or is confirmed as being present, given the current differences between the advice from DfE and that in the Institute's guidance.

    19.2. They have also asked what approach should be taken to commissioned services. Should for example care homes or children's homes be asked to confirm that they do not have RAAC present? If they are asked this question and RAAC is found then it is possible residents would have to be moved from the premises, and found alternative accommodation.

    19.3. If the Institute of Structural Engineer's guidance remains unchanged there are likely to be instances outside of schools and education establishments where RAAC is identified but stays in situ. However there is little evidence about how quickly RAAC can deteriorate in a UK context, and therefore how frequently it should be reinspected to ensure it will not collapse. In the absence of any advice on this local authority surveyors and engineers will have to make assessments based on their own experience and judgement.

20. The LGA will be lobbying for further guidance from government that addresses all these issues.

21. **Supply of appropriately qualified surveyors:** The DfE currently requires surveyors or structural engineers to have 1-year of experience on RAAC-related projects to be considered 'appropriately qualified' to confirm an incident of RAAC. Prior to the Department's announcement, there was already concern within the sector about the supply of these surveyors. In light of recent developments, the LGA has highlighted concerns that the substantial increase in demand for surveyors will now drastically outstrip the supply, leading to backlogs and hindering the ability for local authorities to take quick and decisive action on RAAC.

22. **Data collection:** As part of the OGP RAAC Working Group, central government departments are required to submit data on cases of RAAC in their estates according to a uniform template. The expectation (but not requirement) from the OGP is that the LGA

would cascade this template to local authorities and require that local authorities submit extensive data returns using this template.

23. We continue to welcome member authorities sharing their data on their management of RAAC, but are concerned about the impact this could have on councils:

   23.1. Local authorities are already making strong progress identifying and remediating RAAC. Many have been addressing this issue before the DfE's decision at the end of August, and councils have already been asked to check some of their estate, for example the Regulator of Social Housing has instructed social landlords to check their properties for RAAC.

   23.2. An extensive data collection exercise of this nature would be burdensome and would detract from councils on-going work in relation to identifying and remediating RAAC, as well as placing further financial and resources pressures on councils at a time when they are under significant budget pressures.

   23.3. A data collection exercise led by the LGA would also impact on our relationship with our member authorities.

24. With many buildings councils being accessible to the public, local authorities there is already considerable information in the public domain about which and how many buildings are affected. Councils with buildings with RAAC present will also want assistance and seek expertise and guidance on how to manage and make the RAAC safe. Rather than reporting to central government it would be more helpful if information on buildings with RAAC was shared with key partners such as fire and rescue services where knowledge there is RAAC will inform their fire fighting strategies.

25. **Funding:** There also continues to be significant uncertainty around the funding of remediation and related activity. It is not yet clear what costs councils will be incurring to remediate RAAC, and the LGA is interested in gaining a robust understanding of what 'typical' cases of RAAC are costing local authorities in order to inform our lobbying work. For example some councils with schools with RAAC in their areas are reporting they are incurring costs assisting non-maintained schools respond to the DfE advice, and it is not yet clear if they will be able to recover them. The LGA has been raising this issue with DfE.

26. **Private sector buildings:** The focus so far has been on public sector buildings with RAAC, but we know it is present in commercial settings and it is likely to be found in other private sector settings. At this point it is not clear how building owners in the private sector will be encouraged and assisted to check whether any buildings they own have RAAC present.

Implications for Wales

27. The Welsh government has been working in Wales to identify and remediate RAAC since 2019, when SCOSS issued their alert and the WLGA notified Welsh local authorities about RAAC following the SCOSS alert in 2020. There has been a programme of work in Wales to identify RAAC in the public estate, but following the DfE

decision at the end of August to change their approach the Welsh government has commissioned further surveys of public buildings in Wales.

Financial Implications

28. The costs of remediating RAAC will vary for building owners depending on the extent of its use, but in some cases these will be substantial. The NHS has allocated £698 million between 2021 and 2025 to remediate and put in fail safe measures. It is not currently clear what the costs of remediating RAAC outside of the school estate might cost local authorities, and we are in the process of gathering information on this.

Equalities implications

29. Given the range and type of buildings identified with RAAC, and what appears to be a very limited presence in social housing and other residential settings, it does not appear at this stage there are any particular equalities implications arising from the presence of RAAC.

Next steps

30. Officers will incorporate members' views about the support the LGA is providing to our member authorities into our ongoing work around RAAC.

Local Government White Paper

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

This report outlines the work within the LGA to develop a Local Government White Paper that was announced as an LGA priority at its annual conference, and a process for providing the Board's input to it.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

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Recommendation(s)

That the Board members:

a) **Note the work in the LGA for developing a Local Government White Paper; and**

b) **Agree the process outlined in paragraph 13 for developing the Board's contribution to the White Paper, with proposals being brought back to the Board at its November meeting.**

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Local Government White Paper

Background

1. At the LGA Conference in July, our publication "Make It Local" was launched. The report sets out a range of clear offers from local government in the areas that pollsters are reporting as the biggest issues of concern for the public (and which will form the background to manifesto writing).

2. From this publication, the LGA has a clear set of proposals which shows that the partnership between local and central government is key to delivery and that stronger local democracy leads to a better and more efficient public sector:

   2.1 Local climate action could hit net zero by 2050 while saving taxpayers around £140 billion when compared to national approaches and returning an additional £400 billion in wider co-benefits.

   2.2 A cost-benefit analysis shows a place-based, Work Local approach has the potential to increase by 15 per cent the number of people improving their skills or finding work at lower cost, just by using a limited amount of existing investment more effectively.

   2.3 Every £1 invested in a new social home generates £2.84 in the wider economy with every new social home generating a saving of £780 a year in housing benefit.

   2.4 £1 spent on alcohol treatment services locally provides a return of £3, with local addiction support services saving our overstretched health and social care system a staggering £2 billion every year.

3. The July publication was aimed at those developing manifestos for the next election. The LGA will continue this work with all our political groups. Looking beyond manifesto development, manifestos' headline ideas will be developed into detailed delivery plans by numerous Whitehall departments.

4. The LGA is in a position where it can look to influence the detailed delivery plans of both the first year and the longer-term programme of a new/returning government. It is in this context that the LGA announced the development of a White Paper on Local Government.

Proposal

5. At its meeting earlier in the month the Executive Advisory Board (EAB) considered how the White Paper is developed. It agreed the aim of the White Paper should be to *demonstrate how stronger and more empowered local government could deliver the public's priorities more effectively and strengthen the value that the public place on the UK's democratic structures*.

6. The EAB also agreed that each of the LGA's boards use their policy work to make specific offers from the sector to a new/returning minister in their policy area. In particular the EAB wants boards to consider and make proposals on:

6.1. How public services should be reformed in their policy areas to deliver the ambitions set out in paragraph 5; and

6.2. How local government, and central government should change to deliver the public's priorities in their policy areas.

7. This would then inform a narrative for each relevant Whitehall department and new/returning Secretary of State, with the narrative covering:

7.1. Where the department relies on local government to deliver priorities;

7.2. How stronger and empowered local government would provide better value for money; and

7.3. A set of departmental options for the Kings Speech and the first year's delivery plan.

8. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board will therefore need to develop proposals setting out how a stronger and more empowered local government can deliver more effectively than central government on the public's priorities around reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, improving community safety, and strengthening consumer protection as well as emergency planning. In order to do this the Board will be able to draw on the priorities for the Board outlined in the relevant paper in the agenda, and the work programme that will flow from that. However, if members have some early views on what the Board might be putting forward at this stage that would be helpful as the Board's input is developed.

9. The timetable for the development of the White Paper is for views to be sought from the sector and stakeholders over the autumn through a variety of mechanisms, with these being collated at the start of the new year. It is therefore suggested that officers work up some proposals from the Board taking into account members' views which are then discussed with the Board's Lead Members. Following on from that a more detailed set of proposals are brought back to the Board for discussion at its meeting in November.

Implications for Wales

10. The LGA will work closely with WLGA to share our approach and approved findings. One area of discussion is likely to be the differing model of local/central partnership which has developed in Wales since devolution. Similarly, there is much learning from the models in Northern Ireland and Scotland, and how they are perceived at the local level. There may be elements of the different models for reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, improving community safety and strengthening regulatory services and emergency planning in the devolved administrations that the Safer and Stronger Communities Board will want to consider as it develops proposals for strengthening community safety in England.

Financial Implications

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this work for the Board. Activity suggested in the options developed by each Board should concentrate on what could be delivered by reprioritising existing departmental budgets.

Equalities implications

12. As the Board develops its proposals it will want to consider their impact on equality, diversity and inclusion, and how any proposals it puts forward in relation to community safety and regulatory services may also enhance equality, diversity and inclusion.

Next steps

13. Taking account of any views and comments raised by members officers will develop proposals to be taken initially to the Board's Lead members and then brought back to the Board for consideration at its November meeting.