

26 June 2017

## **Update paper**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

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

### **Recommendation**

That the Safer and Stronger Communities Board members note the update.

### **Action**

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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## **Update paper**

### **Modern Slavery**

1. Following the discussions at the January meeting, the LGA is working with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's office on producing a guide for councillors on modern slavery. The aim of the guide will be to provide a high level overview to support councils to:
  - 1.1. Recognise modern slavery in their local areas;
  - 1.2. Refer it appropriately;
  - 1.3. Spot potential victims of modern slavery, both adults and children, and support them appropriately;
  - 1.4. Recognise and use their tools and powers to disrupt the activities of serious and organised crime groups and individuals exploiting people;
  - 1.5. Successfully work in partnership to end modern slavery in their local area.
2. The LGA and Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's office have worked to create an expert reference group to help inform the guide, bringing together expertise from a wide variety of policy areas to reflect the wide-ranging nature of modern slavery. The guide is currently being drafted and should be published in the autumn.

### **National FGM Centre**

3. Following on from the discussions at the last National FGM Advisory Group meeting, we wanted to give members an update on the Centre.
4. The Centre's funding will now run out at the end of July. In order to secure the Centre's future beyond that date it has developed an extended offer so it can apply for the next round of the competitive Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. On 9 May, the National FGM Centre bid into the Innovation Programme to expand their work into abuse linked to faith or belief and breast ironing/flattening as well as FGM.
5. An initial meeting with the Department to talk through the bid in more detail took place on 15 May. The bid will now go through a number of processes before a decision is made by the relevant minister. Currently we anticipate a decision will be made before the end of July on which bids into the Innovation Programme will receive funding.

### **Public Spaces Protection Orders**

6. We have now published guidance for councils on using Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs), which sets out the issues to consider where local areas are contemplating

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introducing a PSPO, and offers practical guidance on the steps to take if councils choose to do so: <https://www.local.gov.uk/public-spaces-protection-orders-guidance-councils>.

### **Taxi/Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) licensing – national register and ongoing lobbying**

7. Following discussion at the last Board meeting in March, there has been significant progress in regard to a national register of taxi/PHV drivers who have had licenses revoked or refused, with the LGA having commissioned the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) to begin development of a national register of taxi license refusals and revocations. This will be managed, maintained and hosted by NAFN on behalf of all local authorities. NAFN is a not-for-profit shared service hosted by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council which exists to support its members in protecting the public interest.
8. The register will be available at no extra cost to all local authorities already signed up to NAFN's existing data and intelligence services – which is currently 86 per cent of English and Welsh councils. For those councils not already signed up, subscription will cost £1,000 and can be recouped through taxi/PHV license fees, ensuring that access will be cost neutral to authorities. Transport for London have indicated their commitment to being part of the register, and we would welcome the Board's support in ensuring that all councils make use of the register once it is available.
9. The register will support councils to tackle the problem of individuals making applications to different licensing authorities following a refusal or revocation elsewhere, and offers a national response to an issue that extends beyond individual regions.
10. The project launched earlier this month and is intended to be complete by the end of 2017. Further updates will be shared with the Board as the project develops.
11. Wider improvements to the existing outdated taxi/PHV legislation remain a key lobbying priority. Prior to the election, LGA officers had been supporting officers from Stockton as they worked with their MP, Alex Cunningham, to lobby the Government over concerns about Public Carriage Vehicles (PCVs). Following the election and appointment of new Ministers, we intend to resume these discussions and consider other opportunities for Parliamentary lobbying.

### **Brexit**

12. As the Board will recall, Cornwall Council's public protection directorate had been commissioned by the LGA to provide an expert assessment of the EU based consumer protection and related regulations currently applying to the UK. The purpose of this work was to enhance our understanding of what in many cases are very technical regulations which collectively cover a wide range of different issues.
13. Cornwall have now provided this report. The conclusions of the report are in line with many of the themes we have already identified and put forward to the Board as part of our initial review of this area, including in particular:

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- 13.1. The need to maintain public protection where existing regulations have a meaningful benefit, and the relatively limited number of obvious opportunities to remove regulations.
- 13.2. That Brexit may provide an opportunity not to necessarily change regulations but to consider how they can be implemented more effectively by different bodies within the UK, including local authorities.
14. We have used the findings from the Cornwall report and earlier Board discussions to develop a paper to the LGA's Brexit task and finish group providing an initial overview of EU consumer protection and related regulations and the opportunities provided by Brexit. However, as we are conscious that the initial Cornwall report provides a professional perspective of the regulations, it is intended that the work will be followed up by focus group work in Cornwall intended to identify perspectives from a broader range of stakeholders, including local businesses and councillors, to ensure that the feedback is fully representative. We are also intending to convene a national event in late autumn that gives councils from across the country the opportunity to input their thoughts into their specific area of our Brexit work. This will help to further refine our position paper in the coming months.

#### **Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) – proposal to form an Association of PCPs**

15. In February, we were made aware of a proposal being discussed by a number of Police and Crime Panels to form an Association of Police and Crime Panels, with the objective of strengthening PCPs' lobbying position and profile. The LGA has proposed to the steering group looking into this work that an LGA Special Interest Group could provide an appropriate balance between recognising the need for a specific PCP focused forum, while ensuring that these largely councillor led bodies remain with the LGA family.
16. Officers met with representatives of the PCP steering group in April to discuss how LGA special interest groups (SIGs) operate and how this could work in a PCP context. Following this meeting we were advised that the representatives would be recommending to the steering group that PCPs look to establish an LGA SIG, although there appear to be some concerns about the position of non-LGA members in SIGs and a range of different views among PCPs.
17. What is clear from the meeting is that whichever route the steering group decides to take, there is a need for stronger links between the LGA Safer Communities team and Board and PCPs, as there is seemingly little visibility among PCPs of some of the work that the LGA has previously and still undertakes to support PCPs (such as the annual PCP workshop) and of the Board's wider work. This year's workshop will be on Wednesday 12 July, and we are also in the process of putting together a package of support for panels who will be taking on scrutiny of the PCC operating as the Fire and Rescue Service. Once it is clear which option the steering group wishes to pursue, we will map out how we can ensure greater visibility of the LGA's work among panels in future.

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### **Ministerial Appointments**

18. Following the general election there have been a limited number of changes in ministerial positions in the Home Office. The Rt. Hon. Amber Rudd MP, the Rt. Hon. Ben Wallace MP and Sarah Newton MP have all been reappointed to their previous roles as Home Secretary, Minister of State for Security, and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Counter Extremism respectively. There is a change in the position of Minister for Policing and Fire as the Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis MP becomes the Minister for Immigration. He has been replaced in his policing and fire role by Nick Hurd MP. There has also been a change in the Department for Transport, with Andrew Jones MP, the former minister responsible for taxi licensing being moved in the reshuffle. It is not yet clear who will take on responsibility for this area in the new ministerial team.

### **Water Safety Toolkit**

19. We have produced a ten point toolkit for councils to assist them in drawing up a [water safety plan](#). The toolkit contains links to helpful websites and examples and draws on work of partners in the National Water Safety Forum, who were invited to comment on a draft. It is also linked to LGA pages on Water Incident Database statistics and a few case studies and examples of good practice. We are actively seeking more. If you have any suggestions or comments please contact [Charles.loft@local.gov.uk](mailto:Charles.loft@local.gov.uk).

### **County Lines**

20. The Home Office has been in contact with the LGA about the growing issue of 'county lines' – a phenomena first identified in 2014. The term describes the approach taken by gangs originating from large urban areas, who travel to locations elsewhere such as county or coastal towns to sell class A drugs. Gangs typically recruit and exploit children and vulnerable young people to courier drugs and cash between their base and where they are operating, with sales taking place via a mobile phone line used by the gang.
21. Gangs recruit children and young people through deception, intimidation, violence, debt bondage and/or grooming. Gangs also use local property as a base for their activities, and this often involves taking over the home of a vulnerable adult who is unable to challenge them.
22. The Home Office has established a national working group to better coordinate action against county lines, and is initially seeking to raise awareness of the issue in a range of organisations, though councils are often aware of the issue though not under this name. Officers will be working with Home Office officials to assist them in ensuring that practitioners working directly with children and vulnerable adults are aware of what county lines are, how to identify those at risk or involved in county lines exploitation and what action to take.

### **Grenfell Tower**

23. In the early hours of the morning of 14 June a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Although firefighters from London Fire Brigade (LFB) were at the tower block within minutes of the alarm being sounded, the fire

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rapidly spread throughout the tower block. 250 firefighters were involved in fighting the fire and rescuing the occupants of the block. At the time of writing there are 30 confirmed deaths, though this figure is expected to increase because of the numbers of people reported missing to the police who lived in the block.

24. The cause of the fire and the reason it spread so quickly through the tower block are now the subject of both an investigation by LFB and a criminal investigation by the Metropolitan Police. Media reports have focused on the possibility that the external cladding applied to the building caused the fire to spread so rapidly, but there is currently no definitive explanation and will not be until LFB concludes its investigation, which could take a number of weeks given the scale of the damage to the building.
25. Given public concerns about the safety of other tower blocks, councils have been reviewing fire safety assessments, relevant documentation relating to any refurbishments work, taking the advice of their fire and rescue services, and contacting residents to reassure them. The Department of Communities and Local Government has also surveyed councils to identify the number of tower blocks that may be at risk, and also asked them to assess whether cladding used in new build or refurbishment projects of tower blocks is a particular type of cladding. In addition the LGA has written to council leaders and chief executives about the steps being taken by the sector to reassure residents and themselves that a similar fire could not occur in their own tower blocks.
26. Once the LFB investigation is concluded and the cause of the fire is known, there may have to be changes to fire safety advice, guidance and procedures, including the guidance the LGA published in 2011 on fire safety in purpose built flats. The next meeting of Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) on 23 June will undoubtedly wish to discuss the fire and any immediate implications for fire safety. An oral update will be provided at the meeting on FSMC's discussion.