

Safer & Stronger Communities Board– Councillor Simon Blackburn (Chair)

Serious Violence Taskforce

1. In February, I attended the Serious Violence Taskforce meeting, which is chaired by the Home Secretary. The meeting focused on the introduction of Knife Crime Prevention Orders and the Home Office updated on the impact of their #knifefree campaign.

Serious Violence Inquiry

2. In January, I gave oral evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, as part of their [inquiry on serious violent crime](#). I highlighted the importance of tackling the root causes of serious violent crime, through early intervention and prevention initiatives, which require sustainable and long-term Government funding. I have submitted supplementary written evidence to the committee, outlining some of the LGA's recommendations.

Knife crime

3. In January, I visited the Ben Kinsella Trust site in Islington to learn more about their early intervention programmes with children and young people, which help to raise awareness of the consequences of knife crime and serious violence.

Gang's Summit

4. In February, I attended a Gang's Summit, chaired by the Children's Commissioner for England Anne Longfield. The aim of the Summit was to bring together those working on the Government response to violence and those tasked with protecting children at a local level.

Violence Against Women and Girls Event

5. In January, I chaired a joint LGA and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) event on tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG). There were presentations from local authorities and PCCs sharing best practice on this important issue, with a keynote speech from Northumbria PCC Dame Vera Baird and representatives from the Home office.

National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse

6. In February, Deputy-Chair Cllr Anita Lower attended the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse. The meeting focused on the proposals for the draft Domestic Abuse Bill and HMIC's inspection of the police's response to domestic abuse.

Prevent and Counter-Extremism

7. I was recently invited to join the Commission for Countering Extremism's Expert Group and attended the Group's meeting in February. The Commission is a non-statutory independent expert committee of the Home Office, headed up by Sara Khan as Lead Commissioner. The initial objectives for the Commission are to engage widely on extremism and Britain's values across the public sector, communities, civil society, and with legal and academic experts; produce a strategic assessment of the threat faced from extremism, and the current response;

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and advise Ministers on the Commission's future structures and work programme. The Expert Group will provide the Lead Commissioner with advice and challenge in her first 12 months of the Commission.

8. In February I chaired a meeting of Chief Executives and senior officers from local authorities involved in Home Office CONTEST Multi-Agency Centre pilots to discuss progress with the pilots to date and future plans.
9. Cllr Anita Lower attended a seminar on Becoming Proactive Towards the Far Right in Sheffield, organised by the [Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism](#) (SIGCE). Outcomes from the day, and details of future SIGCE seminars, will be published on the SIGCE's online [Knowledge Hub](#).
10. Cllr Lower chaired the LGA's recent Leadership Essentials course for councillors on counter-extremism. We are now preparing for the next free course on Prevent and counter-extremism, which will take place in Darlington on 26-27 March. There are still places available at the March event – these are highly regarded courses and open to all elected members to attend. Please contact grace.collins@local.gov.uk for further details.

FGM

'Defying the cutting season' Screening

11. In early February, Cllr Anita Lower attended and took part in a panel discussion at a parliamentary screening of a new BBC film called 'Defying the cutting season' about a group protecting young girls and women from FGM in Tanzania. The screening and panel discussion was hosted by the BBC in conjunction with Sarah Champion, MP for Rotherham.

National FGM Centre Advisory Group meeting

12. In early March, Cllr Anita Lower chaired the National FGM Centre Advisory Group meeting. The meeting focused on the forward plan for the National FGM Centre and ensuring the Centre is able to continue to support system change in relation to FGM, breast flattening and other harmful practices associated with faith and belief.

Fire Services Management Committee

13. In January Cllr Ian Stephens, Cllr Nick Chard, Cllr John Robinson and Cllr Roger Price attended the first Fire Finance Senior Sector Group meeting at the Home Office. This group is designed to support the fire sector in producing a submission to the governmental spending review and has representatives from the National Fire Chief's Council and the Home Office. Members of FSMC also attended a Fire Finance Workshop in February to consider Efficiency and Productivity.
14. In early February Cllr Nick Chard attended the first meeting of the newly established Fire Standards Board. At the meeting the general purpose and programme of the board was established.
15. In late February, London Assembly Member Fiona Twycross, chaired the 11th programme of the Fire Leadership Essentials at Warwick Conferences, the programme was attended by councillors from a variety of fire authorities, alongside officers from Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner offices.

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16. In January Cllr Les Byrom attended the Strategic Resilience Board, the Board covers a range of national resilience matters from specific threats to technology and international co-operation.
17. In January and February Cllr Rebecca Knox and Cllr Hennessey chaired three Fire Diversity and Inclusion Masterclasses in the South West, North West and West Midlands. The events covered key areas of supportive culture in the fire sector with speakers from local fire services, HMICFRS and the Home Office.
18. In February, Cllr Eric Carter attended the Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group planning workshop on behalf of FSMC. The workshop focused on defining the key priorities of the group in the coming year.

Licensing and regulation

Trading standards

19. In January I met with Lord Toby Harris, Chair of National Trading Standards (NTS) to hear about key issues for the organisation. Discussion focused on forthcoming Consumer White Paper and preparations for Brexit.

Environmental Health

20. Cllr Anita Lower spoke at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's 'Year Ahead', conference in January as part of a panel exploring the challenges and opportunities for local government regulatory services in the context of Brexit.

Best bar none awards

21. Cllr Kate Haigh attended the Best Bar None Awards at the House of Lords in February. The awards were in recognition of the work partners had achieved as part of Best Bar None to improve the night time economy. Plymouth was awarded 'best overall scheme' for the second year.

LGA Annual Licensing Conference

22. In February, Cllr Anita Lower chaired the LGAs Annual Licensing Conference which was attended by over 100 Members and officers. The conference covered a range of different areas of licensing with Minister for taxis Nusrat Ghani MP taking the opportunity to announce that the government would shortly be responding to the taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) working group report. Other speakers included the Information Commissioner's Office and Defra. Both Cllr Eric Allen and Cllr Kate Haigh spoke at the conference with delegates also hearing from a number of councils who identified best practice and shared their own experiences.

Water Safety

23. In March Cllr James Dawson attended the LGAs Coastal Special Interest Group meeting to update on the Board's work on water safety, including the recent response to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's review of responsibilities for beach safety.

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Gordon Moody Stakeholder Event

24. Cllr Eric Allen attended the Gordon Moody Association Annual Stakeholder Event at City Hall in January. Gordon Moody is a charity providing residential treatment services for people with severe gambling problems, and the event was an opportunity to hear directly from people who had experienced gambling addictions, including from a young age.

Media Roundup

25. Since the last Forum, I have given comments in the following press releases on behalf of the Board:

25.1 [legal tobacco trade harming efforts to cut smoking, councils warn](#)

25.2 [LGA responds to Which? report on consumer rights enforcement](#)

25.3 [LGA responds to new DFT taxi licensing guidance and reforms](#)

25.4 ['Lawless' shisha bars need licensing to tackle serious crime and weak smoke-free laws](#)

25.5 [LGA responds to draft Domestic Abuse Bill](#)

26. Since the last Forum, the National FGM Centre (which is run by the LGA and children's charity Barnardo's), has contributed to the following news items:

FGM Perpetrators are cutting babies

27. A barrister has warned that babies and toddlers are falling victim to female genital mutilation. Perpetrators target infants as it is harder to detect because they cannot report the abuse themselves and are not old enough to be at school, where signs may be spotted by teachers and other professionals. Leethan Bartholomew, head of the National FGM Centre, which was set up by Barnardo's and the LGA said "there is anecdotal evidence of FGM being performed on babies as it is a way of circumnavigating the legal system so a girl won't remember that she's been cut." This was featured in: the [Times p21](#), BBC Online, BBC Victoria Derbyshire.

First Conviction of FGM in UK

28. A mother of a three-year-old girl has become the first person to be found guilty of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the UK in a landmark case. The Ugandan woman, 37, from Walthamstow in east London was accused of cutting her daughter over the 2017 summer bank holiday. FGM was made illegal in the UK more than three decades ago but prosecutors have struggled to secure a conviction. Campaigners said they hoped the conviction would encourage other victims to report the crime. Leethan Bartholomew, head of the National FGM Centre which is run by the LGA and children's charity Barnardo's, praised the victim for assisting the investigation and hoped grassroots campaign groups would be given more support to train professionals. This story featured in the: [Mail p10](#), i paper p6, Telegraph p2, Times p19, Guardian p10, Mirror p7, Sun p36, Star p2, BBC Online, Sky News Online.

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