

Safer & Stronger Communities Board – report from Councillor Ann Lucas OBE (Chair)

National Group on Sexual Violence

1. Cllr Lisa Brett, the Board's Deputy Chair, represented the LGA at the May meeting of the **Home Office's national group on sexual violence against children and vulnerable adults**, which was chaired by the Minister for Crime Prevention, Norman Baker MP. The group received an update on the new action plan for tackling sexual violence, which will be published in the summer, and a guide to establishing multi-agency safeguarding hubs to facilitate and encourage sharing of information between partners. The main proposal for discussion was whether a mandatory reporting duty should be introduced where there were suspicions of abuse taking place, and in what circumstances such a duty might operate.

Community trigger workshops

2. The Board's Deputy Chair Cllr Lisa Brett chaired the first of the workshops we are running for councils on **establishing a community trigger process** under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Delegates at the event in York heard from the Home Office about the reasons for the introduction of the trigger, the lessons from the trials run in four councils, and the timetable for introducing the trigger which is expected to be October. Speakers from three councils that have already established and run a community trigger process then talked through their experiences of doing so and what they had learned from this, before delegates had an opportunity to discuss the key challenges they would need to work through to set up their own trigger processes.

FGM Working Group

3. The FGM working group, which includes Cllrs Lisa Brett, David Burbage and Janet Daby from the Board along with Cllr Gillian Ford from the Health and Wellbeing Board and Cllr David Simmonds from the Children and Young People's Board met at the start of June to discuss how councils and the police could work together better to tackle FGM with the Association of Chief Police Officers lead on FGM, Commander Mak Chishty from the Metropolitan Police. The working group also heard from the London Borough of Newham about the specialist FGM service they have established, and members then considered the tool kit for councils that the LGA will be producing to assist them in their work to reduce and prevent FGM.

Scrap Metal Dealers Act implementation

4. Cllr Richard Stay represented the LGA at a meeting between the Minister for Crime Prevention, Norman Baker MP, and representatives from the Gypsy and Traveller communities about the impact of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act on members of their communities who operated as dealers. The Gypsy and Traveller representatives raised concerns about the number of licences they needed to obtain to work as mobile collectors, the cost of the licences and the time it had taken some councils to issue the

licences. The LGA will be working with the Home Office to identify good practice in supporting Gypsies and Travellers when applying for licences.

Business rates and licences

5. St Edmundsbury Council contacted the LGA, on behalf of the Anglia Revenues Partnership, raising concern about councils being required to issue licences under the 2003 Licensing Act to businesses that owe many thousands of pounds in unpaid business rates. Cllr Ann Lucas has written with Cllr Sharon Taylor to Norman Baker MP and Brandon Lewis MP, to raise this issue with them and request a change in the legislation to enable the refusal of a licence in these circumstances.

Gambling and Betting

6. Cllr Tony Page continues to meet with key stakeholders with an interest in the **LGA's Betting Commission**, and in light of the recent Government announcement proposing new planning powers on betting shops. Recent meetings have been held with the Responsible Gambling Trust and Campaign for Fairer Gambling; the next meeting of the Betting Commission will take place on 4 June.

Public Fundraising Regulatory Authority

7. On 4 June Cllr Nick Worth, the Board's regulatory services champion, spoke at the **Public Fundraising Regulatory Authority's AGM**, at which the 250th site agreement between a council and the PFRA was signed. The agreements have been signed under a framework developed by the LGA and PFRA to address council and residents' concerns about the number and behaviour of 'chuggers' in certain areas. Nearly 90 councils now have agreements in place, some covering multiple sites. Cllr Worth praised the framework as an example of councils and their partners developing solutions that address local problems and support local high streets without the need for government intervention.

Taxis and the Deregulation Bill

8. I wrote to the Minister for Transport to express the LGA's serious concerns about the contentious clauses **on taxi regulations** which have been introduced to the Deregulation Bill without prior consultation with local government. We applaud the intention to reduce burdens on drivers and accordingly would support the longer-term introduction of variants of these proposals. However, the proposed clauses could have serious unintended consequences for the safety of passengers and we believe that these clauses should be withdrawn, pending consideration of the Law Commission's recently published report on taxi licensing legislation, which provides an opportunity to reform taxi and private hire licensing on a comprehensive basis.

Blue light integration

9. On 25 March Cllr Kay Hammond, Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee, chaired the Reforming Blue Light Services Conference which examined how to develop effective partnerships and discuss the future for **integrating our emergency services** and was attended by senior representatives of the Police, Fire and Rescue and

Ambulance Services. Speakers at the conference included Brandon Lewis MP and Sir Ken Knight.

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