

New Government – Queen’s Speech and priorities

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

The Queen’s Speech on Thursday 19 December 2019 set out the Government’s legislative agenda for the next session of Parliament. This report sets out an overview of the Bills and announcements contained within the speech which will be of specific interest to the Community Wellbeing Board.

Recommendations

Community Wellbeing Board Members are invited to note the Bills and announcements in the Queen’s Speech of interest to the Board.

Actions

Officers to incorporate members’ comments in future work on these areas, and to use members’ comments on the Bills and announcements to inform the Board’s work going forwards.

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Background

1. Following the General Election on Thursday 12 December 2019, the Queen’s Speech took place on 19 December.
2. A number of the Bills and announcements in the Queen’s Speech had previously been included in the legislative programme announced in the October Queen’s Speech. The commitments in October included bringing forward proposals to address the crisis in adult social care and put it on a sustainable footing, implementing the legislative changes the NHS have identified as part of their work on the Long term Plan, a Health Service Safety Investigations Bill, publication of a mental health White Paper, and a continued commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. This paper provides a detailed overview of the key proposals from the Board’s perspective, linked to its 2019-2020 work plan, as well as other announcements which may impact the council services within the Board’s remit. The LGA’s full briefing on the Queen’s Speech is available to view [here](#).
3. This paper also includes for background reference a summary of manifesto commitments made by the Conservative Party during the General Election relevant to the work of the Board. This is drawn from a summary of the local government related manifesto commitments made by all the main parties during the General Election campaign, which was published by the LGA’s public affairs team.

Social Care Reform

4. The Queen’s Speech announced the Government’s intention to seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long term reform of social care. Their aim is to ensure that the social care system provides everyone with the dignity and security they deserve and that no one who needs care has to sell their home to pay for it. The Queen’s Speech also confirmed that councils will receive the further £1 billion for adults and children’s social care in every year of the Parliament that had been included in the 2019 Spending Round.
5. In our response we said that as a cross-party organisation the LGA had previously offered to host and facilitate cross-party talks and that offer remains open to the Government. We also said that after many years of failed attempts at reform, local government is eager to see - and support - meaningful and lasting change for the benefit of all people who use and work in adult social care and support. We argued that proposals will need to be practical and workable so that adults of all ages are supported to live the lives they want to lead. This means ensuring that the current system is adequately funded, as well as introducing reforms which improve access to care and pool the financial risk so individuals do not face catastrophic costs. We also proposed that social care funding should be increased and the commitment to do this enshrined in

law, so that social care benefits from the same approach taken to new investment in the NHS.

NHS Funding Bill

6. In the Queen's Speech the government committed to enshrining the National Health Service's multi-year funding settlement in law. The Bill had its second reading in the House of Commons on 27 January 2020.
7. In our briefings on the Queen's Speech and the Bill itself we emphasised that while the additional investment in the NHS was welcome, the NHS does not operate in isolation and the increased funding will only be maximised if there is an equivalent scale of investment in social care, public health and prevention services. We also highlighted the reduction in local authorities public health grant funding between 2015/16 and 2019/20, and that to match the growth in NHS funding the public health grant should increase to £3.9 billion by 2024/25. In addition we pointed out that adult social care had been propped up by one-off injections of funding, and that longer term certainty for social care and public health services would help stabilise care and support.

NHS Long Term Plan Bill

8. As the Board has heard on previous items on the NHS Long Term Plan the Bill is designed to make it easier for NHS organisations to work collectively, and to make it easier to implement the plan. The proposals in the Bill were consulted on by the NHS in 2019, and will include provisions to promote collaboration by providing a better balance between competition and collaboration, improve procurement practice, provide incentives through the payment system in the NHS for better collaboration between commissioners and providers, integrating care provision, and improving planning around capital spend.
9. In our response we broadly supported the intentions of the Bill, but noted that while making it easier for different parts of the NHS to work together is important the government avoids inadvertently creating a two-tier system which introduces more barriers to collaboration between the NHS and councils. As the NHS operates within a complex system involving local government, voluntary and community services and private and independent providers we suggested there should be a duty to collaborate on integration that applies equally to the NHS and local government.

Other Bills and announcements of interest

10. Alongside these key Bills, the Queen's Speech included details of a number of other Bills and announcements which also fall within the remit of or will otherwise be of interest to the Board.

Mental Health reform

11. In the Queens' Speech the government committed to continue to work to reform the Mental Health Act. To do this the government will publish a White Paper early this year. We supported the plans to reform the Mental Health Act and give people a stronger say in their treatment.
12. We highlighted the key role local government plays in supporting people detained under the Mental Health Act, and suggested clear links should be made with the related Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act so that people can access the support and independent advocacy they need. As well as legislative reform we said this needed to be accompanied by improved community mental health provision and a shift in focus to prevention and early intervention for adults, young people and children, in order to reduce the need for more intensive or acute mental health services.

National disability strategy

13. The government committed in the Queen's Speech to transform the lives of disabled people, ensuring they have access to opportunities and are able to achieve their potential. It will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People this year to ensure disabled people can lead a life of opportunity and fulfilment. The strategy, will be developed with disabled people, disability organisations and charities, and will cover housing, education and transport.
14. Our response welcomed the announcement of a national strategy for disabled people, as councils provide a wide range of services that support people with disability to remain independent and fully engaged in their communities. We indicated we would be responding to the consultation to develop the strategy.

The Armed Forces Covenant

15. There was a commitment in the Queen's Speech to honour the Armed Forces Covenant. The government stated the Covenant would be further incorporated into law. No further detail was provided in the briefings on the Speech, so we will have to see what this means for councils and the issues the legislation will seek to address. There is likely to be a focus on reducing the disadvantage suffered by veterans and serving personnel and their families. In the Queen's Speech the government also it would introduce various measures to further support veterans and publish the UK Government's Strategy action plan.
16. In our response we pointed out that armed forces serving personnel, veterans and their families are valued members of our communities which is why all councils are committed to supporting them and have signed the voluntary Armed Forces Covenant. Councils already work with partners to provide a range of services that help veterans and their families smoothly transition from the armed forces to civilian life, and to meet any additional needs arising from their service, including periods of crisis that require

intensive support. However we said additional funding is needed to replace capacity that is being lost as a result of the ending of valuable local government projects funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Recruitment and retention in the NHS

17. The Queen's Speech also included references to the government's wider reform agenda for the NHS including the commitment to recruit 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors and 6,000 more primary care professionals.
18. Our response said that with regard to the recruitment and retention of NHS staff, it is crucial that the government recognises that the NHS does not work in isolation and there are large number of health workers in councils and in social care providers. With 110,000 current vacancies in social care alone it is imperative that provisions to recruit and retain core health staff do not stop at the boundaries of NHS employment and that in putting in place new arrangements for immigration the same priority is given to the social care workforce as to the NHS. A truly integrated approach to care and wellbeing requires coordination across the wider workforce and parity between workers in local government and the NHS.

Health Service Safety Investigations Bill

19. This Bill will establish the Health Service Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB), an independent body to investigate serious healthcare incidents. Alongside that the Bill will amend the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, to give English NHS bodies the power to appoint Medical Examiners and placing a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that enough Medical Examiners are appointed in the healthcare system in England. The introduction of medical examiners is designed to strengthen safeguards by providing additional scrutiny of the medical circumstances and cause of deaths in non-coronial cases. It will also improve the quality of death certification and avoid unnecessary distress for the bereaved.
20. Much of this Bill is not of direct relevance to councils, however we welcomed the decision to Amend the 2009 Act to give responsibility to the NHS to appoint medical examiners as the 2009 legislation gives responsibility to councils to appoint medical examiners. Our view is that measures to improve the clinical governance of the health service sit better with the NHS than with local authorities.

Implications for Wales

21. Health and social care matters are devolved responsibilities so the provisions set out in this report will only apply in England.

Financial Implications

22. There are no financial implications for the LGA arising from this report, though a number of the announcements included in the Queen's Speech will have financial implications for councils.

Next steps

23. Members are asked to note the Bills and announcements in the Queen's Speech of interest to the Board.

Appendix: summary of Conservative Party General Election manifesto commitments of relevance to CWB

This appendix summarises those manifesto pledges made by the Conservative Party ahead of its election in the General Election which are of relevance to the Board's work. The headings used reflect areas of work for the Board rather than the topic areas in the Conservative manifesto. Some, but not all of the pledges have now been incorporated within the legislative programme set out in the Queen's Speech.

Adult social care and carers

- Build a cross-party consensus to bring forward an answer that solves the [social care] problem.
- Nobody needing care should be forced to sell their home to pay for it.
- Additional funding of £1 billion for the year beginning in April 2020. [...] confirming this additional funding in every year of the new Parliament.
- Extend the entitlement to leave for unpaid carers, [...] to one week.
- Support the main carer in any household receiving the Universal Credit payment.

Public health

- Promote the uptake of vaccines via [a] national vaccination strategy.
- Extend social prescribing and expand the new National Academy of Social Prescribing.
- Extend healthy life expectancy by five years by 2035.
- Tackle drug-related crime, and at the same time take a new approach to treatment so we can reduce drug deaths and break the cycle of crime linked to addiction.

Mental health

- Treat mental health with the same urgency as physical health.
- Legislate so that patients suffering from mental health conditions, including anxiety or depression, have greater control over their treatment.

Funding, staffing and structure

- [Give] the NHS its biggest ever cash boost, with 20 hospital upgrades and 40 new hospitals, while delivering 50,000 more nurses and 6,000 more doctors and creating an extra 50 million general practice appointments a year.
- Within the first three months of our new term, [...] will enshrine in law [a] fully funded, long-term NHS plan.
- Build and fund 40 new hospitals over the next 10 years.
- End unfair hospital car parking charges by making parking free for those in greatest need, including disabled people, frequent outpatient attenders, parents of sick children staying overnight and staff working night shifts.

- Migrants will contribute to the NHS – and pay in before they can receive benefits.
- Qualified doctors, nurses and allied health professionals with a job offer from the NHS, who have been trained to a recognised standard, and who have good working English, will be offered fast-track entry, reduced visa fees and dedicated support to come to the UK with their families.
- Increase the NHS surcharge paid by those from overseas.
- Double the budget for our health tourism enforcement unit. [...] continue to offer free emergency care to anyone who needs it.

Access, accountability and transparency

- Improve NHS performance, using [the] funding settlement to bring down operating waiting times, improve A&E performance and increase cancer survival rates.
- In order to help communities cope better with pressures on public services, we will ensure that new GP and school places are delivered ahead of people moving into new housing developments.

Disabilities

- Make it easier for people with learning disabilities and autism to be discharged from hospital and improve how they are treated in law.
- Provide £74 million over three years for additional capacity in community care settings for those with learning disabilities and autism.
- Reduce the number of reassessments [for Universal Credit] a disabled person must go through when a significant change in condition is unlikely
- Publish a National Strategy for Disabled People before the end of 2020. This will look at ways to improve the benefits system, opportunities and access for disabled people in terms of housing, education, transport and jobs.
- Reduce the disability employment gap.

Cancer, diseases, new medicines and technologies

- Find a cure [for dementia] one of [the] Government's biggest collective priorities – one of the 'grand challenges'. This will include doubling research funding into dementia and speeding up trials for new treatments.
- Roll out cancer diagnostic machines across 78 hospital trusts to boost early diagnosis.
- Overhaul NHS screening and use new technology and mobile screening services to prevent ill health.
- Focus on helping patients with multiple conditions to have simplified and more joined-up access to the NHS.
- Develop new treatments for serious diseases.
- Extend the successful Cancer Drugs Fund into an Innovative Medicines Fund
- Improve the early diagnosis and treatment of all major conditions

End of Life Care

- Support [...] hospices, [by] developing the plans already announced to secure their future, with a £25 million cash injection in August to support 200,000 people at the end of their lives.

Armed Forces Covenant

- Introduce new legislation to tackle the [...] legal claims that undermine our Armed Forces and further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into law.

Asylum and refugees

- Continue to grant asylum and support to refugees fleeing persecution, with the ultimate aim of helping them to return home if it is safe to do so.