

## **Safer and Stronger Communities Board – End of Year Report**

### **Background**

1. At its meeting in September the Board considered its priorities for 2019/20 and agreed five overarching themes:
  - 1.1. Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion;
  - 1.2. Community safety;
  - 1.3. Blue light services and civil resilience
  - 1.4. Licensing and regulation
  - 1.5. Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners.
2. Alongside these Board priorities, the contribution the Board would make to cross-cutting priorities identified by the Leadership Board – in particular supporting councils to respond to the Grenfell tragedy and Britain’s exit from the EU – was also recognised in the work plan.
3. This paper provides an overview of the achievements delivered against these themes and seeks an initial steer from the Board on its priorities for 2019/20. As the Board will be aware from item 3 of the agenda, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of the work plan agreed in September, with resources diverted towards the activity set out in that paper. It is expected that the ongoing impact of Covid-19 will continue to divert the team’s capacity away from some of our normal areas of focus, as well as creating specific Covid-19 pieces of work in the areas that we are able to continue to prioritise.
4. Feedback from members on their priorities for next year will subsequently be developed into a full paper for consideration at the first meeting of the 2019/20 Board cycle in September.

### **Prevent, counter extremism and cohesion**

- 5 We have run two well-attended leadership essentials courses for councillors on Prevent and cohesion & integration. Unfortunately, a further two courses planned for the year had to be cancelled because of the General Election and pandemic respectively.

- 6 We have continued with our work to develop and facilitate two online knowledge hubs to develop and share good practice on countering extremism and Prevent delivery. Over the year, membership of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) KHub has grown to include officers from 90 councils, alongside representatives from other statutory partners, providing a platform for disseminating resources, sharing challenges and responses to extremism issues and linking local authorities facing similar threats, including emerging issues related to the pandemic; our work has included developing case studies and other guidance materials for publication on the site. We have also grown the Prevent KHub to include membership from 85 councils, alongside other partner agencies.
- 7 We have worked with the SIGCE to establish two new elected member networks in the North and East of England, complementing our existing Prevent member networks in Yorkshire & Humber, and the North East. The networks have brought together local leaders across each region to help understand and respond to emerging threats and provide mutual support. We have also assisted with the delivery of a SIGCE seminar on women and extremism and its links to misogyny; and supported an event at Leeds council for over 150 delegates on Bridging Northern communities, to explore common issues facing communities across the North of England around radicalisation, extremism and integration.
- 8 Working with SIGCE colleagues we formed a new working group to explore and respond to the challenges facing councils from Islamist extremism, and continued to work with the SIGCE's far-right working group, responding to challenges from far-right extremism. The latter includes supporting the development of a community dialogue project to trial and evaluate practical approaches to engage communities around cohesion issues and build resilience to far-right extremist narratives (while some of this work has had to be paused during Covid-19, it is hoped this will continue into next year).
- 9 We have contributed to the SIGCE's formal evaluation and continued to lobby for further central government funding to support the SIGCE's work for 2020 onwards.
- 10 We have completed guidance for scrutiny councillors on Prevent and counter-extremism (publication has been delayed due to the pandemic but is expected imminently).
- 11 We worked with the Commission for Countering Extremism to host a roundtable to explore harms from extremism, which fed into the Commission's October 2019 report on Challenging Hateful Extremism and have had discussions with Home Office officials regarding the Counter-Extremism Strategy. Plans for two further cohesion and integration events in Spring 2020 had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.
- 12 In December 2019 we provided a submission in response to a call for evidence from the Independent Review of Prevent. Over the year we also fed in sector views to the review of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for the supervision of offenders

convicted of terrorism or terrorism related offences; and the establishment of CONTEST Multi-Agency Centre Pilots, aimed at better understanding and managing risks from individuals who have been subject to national security investigations.

### **Community safety**

- 13 On **domestic abuse**, we have been active and influential in our lobbying of Government and Parliament regarding to the Domestic Abuse Bill, with Cllr Simon Blackburn giving oral evidence to Draft Domestic Abuse Bill Committee, the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on Domestic Abuse and the House of Commons Domestic Abuse Public Bill. The LGA also [briefed](#) Parliamentarians through various debate stages of the Domestic Abuse Bill, which has now returned to Parliament. Several MPs referred to our key messages, with some MPs explicitly highlighting the local government finance gap and our calls for investment in early intervention and prevention. We have also indicated our support for the Safe Lives' campaign calling for a National Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy.
- 14 We submitted a [response](#) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's consultation on domestic abuse accommodation support and services. We continue to liaise with the Department to ensure the proposals are fully funded. The LGA continues to provide contributions to the National Oversight Group on domestic abuse.
- 15 On **serious violence**, the LGA continues to contribute to national-level strategic discussions on serious violent crime and county lines activity, as members of the Serious Violence Taskforce and the County Lines Working Group, as well as contributing to the Prime Minister's Serious Violent Crime Summit and the Children's Commissioner's Gangs Summit. Our Chair met with many key stakeholders working on this agenda: including the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden and the Chief Executive of the Ben Kinsella Trust, Patrick Green.
- 16 Following a successful Annual Conference workshop session on taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime, we held an LGA conference focusing on this important issue in October 2019 and held a sub-plenary session at the National Children and Adult Services Conference in November 2019. We also held an LGA conference on tackling knife crime, which over 65 councils were represented and over 100 delegates in attendance. Unfortunately a planned county lines conference and councillor training were both postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 17 The LGA submitted a response to the Home Office's consultation on a serious violence duty and continue to work with the Government to shape the forthcoming Serious Violence Bill and statutory guidance. We also submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs) and [briefed](#) MPs ahead of the Offensive Weapons Bill.

- 18 We pushed our key messages on tackling serious violent crime in Parliament, with the SSCB Chair giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on serious violent crime and briefing MPs and Peers ahead of a number of Parliamentary debates in which our briefings were quoted. The Home Affairs Committee report reinforced our calls for greater investment in youth and children's services, to prompt a shift towards early intervention and prevention in tackling serious violent crime.
- 19 We published a range of guidance documents relating to tackling **modern slavery**, including a series of case studies, a councillor guide and specific guidance on tackling exploitation in hand car washes. We have continued to engage with a range of stakeholders, including the Home Office's Modern Slavery Unity, third sector organisations, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, National Crime Agency and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Dame Sara Thornton, to discuss the role of councils in disrupting slavery and supporting victims, and the challenges facing them in doing so.
- 20 The LGA continues to contribute to Government strategic discussions on tackling **anti-social behaviour** and regularly attends the Home Office-led Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board. We hosted a well-attended conference on anti-social behaviour in October 2019; our annual Police and Crime Panels workshop, where we launched updated guidance for panels, also attracted over 60 delegates.
- 21 The LGA has been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise councils' concerns about **unauthorised encampments**. In March 2020, the LGA submitted its [response](#) to the Government [consultation](#) on strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.
- 22 The LGA has continue to support the National **FGM** Centre this year in partnership with Barnardo's. Cllr Anita Lower has continued to chair the Centre's Advisory Group and to represent the LGA at conferences run by the Centre on FGM and other harmful practices. We have supported the Centre to develop their sustainability plan and to continue to lobby government for an extension of the Centre's funding.

### **Water Safety**

- 23 Whilst the publication on the independent review of the legal framework for beach safety commissioned by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has been delayed, members received an update on key recommendations from the reviews author at the March SSCB meeting. The review will make recommendations for greater clarity about responsibilities for beach management and is expected to be published later this year.
- 24 The National Fire Chief's Council water safety lead, Dawn Whittaker ran a workshop session on water safety at the LGA's Fire Conference in March which was an opportunity to promote the importance of community leadership in tackling the issue of drowning.

### **Blue light services and civil resilience**

- 25 We have continued to work on fire reform, inputting into the inspection process and holding a position on the Fire Standards Board. We have held a number of workshops on the issues raised by the inspectorate and they formed a large part of the discussion at the Annual Fire Conference. At Conference we launched our new publication on the [Climate emergency for fire and rescue services](#); the report outlines the basis of concerns around climate change from the perspective of the fire sector.
- 26 We have provided two leadership essentials programmes for our **fire and rescue authority** (FRA) members to highlight particular issues facing the fire sector, including information on workforce reform, inspection, inclusion and diversity, Home Office priorities, and governance. We ran an Inclusion and Diversity Masterclass in the South West which brought together members and officers to consider how to best address this issue in collaboration.
- 27 We have created a new Inclusion and Diversity Champion Network for FRA members, aimed at supporting improvement in local services. The Network meets to share good practice and will work to produce outputs including a standard role description for diversity and inclusion champions and other resources.
- 28 We have published a guide for members entitled "[Leading the fire sector: Oversight of fire and rescue service performance](#)" to provide an overview of governance in the sector and provide advice on performance overview and scrutiny. To accompany the guide we held two workshops for members on governance and oversight of performance and shorter workshop at LGA Fire Conference.
- 29 We organised two councillor training events on civil resilience, in the North East and for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum area: both were very well received. Officers continued to liaise with MHCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division regarding local mutual aid processes. However, planned work to develop tools to support councils with building community resilience in relation to emergency responses was overtaken by events, in terms of Covid-19 (which may have helped achieve this objective more comprehensively than our work would have done!).

### **Licensing and regulation**

- 30 We published a series of guidance documents on **alcohol licensing**, including a councillor handbook on the Licensing Act and a series of case studies on the night time economy. We also worked with Public Health England to revise our joint guidance for councils' public health teams on engaging with alcohol licensing. The guidance provides practical ways that public health can input into the licensing process and includes some new local examples of how teams have made effective contributions.

- 31 In March we delivered the first Leadership Essentials course for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of licensing committees. The course focused on effective chairing and the wider leadership role for licensing, understanding key areas of licensing and exploring how a good licensing committee works and makes decisions. The course was over-subscribed and received extremely positive feedback.
- 32 On **taxis**, we continue to promote the use of the National Register of taxi licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3) following its launch in 2018. Over 70 councils are now using the register as part of their licensing checks and in total there have been over 30,000 searches of the register.
- 32.1 We took an active role in a taxi fees court case given the wider sector impact. Following a judicial review of Wakefield council by the local taxi and private hire association, the Court of Appeal ruled earlier this year that councils can recover the costs of monitoring and enforcing driver conduct as part of the fees they charge for taxi driver licences. This ruling is particularly significant as lack of clarity in the legislation has meant that many councils have not been recovering these enforcement costs and instead have subsidised them through other funds. We are pleased that a clear legal basis has now been established, and developed an advice note for councils on the implications of this ruling.
- 32.2 We have continued to call on Government to stick to the commitment that was made last year to strengthen out of date taxi and private hire legislation to improve passenger safety. The Covid-19 pandemic appears to have yet again delayed publication of the Government's updated statutory guidance on taxi and PHV licensing.

### **Crematoria, coroners and medical examiners**

- 33 The planned work on crematoria, coroners and medical examiners has been impacted significantly by Covid-19, with additional work required as outlined in agenda item 4. This work has involved not only crematoria and burial services, but also registrars and emergency planners.
- 34 The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation into the funeral market was originally paused during the Covid-19 outbreak acknowledging the pressure that local authorities were under. However, the CMA is required by statute to complete its investigation by 27 March 2021. They have therefore announced that submissions on the working papers they released in February are due by the 12 June, with any final submissions needed by 19 June. A response from the Board will be signed off by Lead Members.

### **Supporting councils to respond to the Grenfell tragedy**

- 35 Officers have continued to lead the LGA's building safety work, following the Grenfell Tower fire three years ago. Our lobbying has influenced several changes to policy: the lowering of the height at which sprinklers are required in new buildings; the lowering of the height at which combustible materials are banned from external wall systems (the government has announced its intention to do this); the provision of £1bn of funding for the remediation of dangerous non-ACM cladding and the application of that funding to buildings just under 18m.
- 36 Officers have participated in the Fire Protection Board (FPB), which is overseeing improvements to the fire safety inspection of high-rise buildings; the Joint Regulators Group, which is supporting the development of the new building safety regime and a working group on guidance around the new Fire Safety Bill. Notable outcomes of this work include: important changes to the wording of the questions posed to fire services by the FPB (to prevent a transfer of responsibility from duty-holder to FRSs); improvements to the proposed machinery around FPB inspection and reporting; lowering of the height at which buildings will come under the building safety regulator at the planning stage from 30m to 18m; ongoing changes to guidance and regulation that support 'quick wins' around FRS influence on the existing planning and building control process; confirmation that local authority building control will be the sole provider of building control regulation for buildings 'in scope' under the Building Safety Bill.
- 37 We have liaised with HSE as it sets up the Building Safety Regulator in shadow form, ensuring it considers councils perspective.
- 38 The LGA has hosted the Joint Inspection Team, whose activities are detailed in the Building Safety Update paper.
- 39 We have continued to raise concerns around large panel system buildings and helped to arrange a roundtable for owners earlier this year.
- 40 We have updated our advice to councils on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and have participated in a cross-Government group on RAAC,
- 41 We plan to continue the above activities, as the Fire Safety Bill proceeds through its passage and as the Building Safety Bill enters pre-legislative scrutiny next month and then comes before Parliament, to ensure the new regime delivers an effective safety regime, protects the financial position of leaseholders and is workable for stockholding councils.

### **Britain's exit from the EU**

- 42 Throughout the second half of 2019, officers contributed to the LGA's Brexit work, in relation to both regulatory services (which would have been significantly impacted by a

no deal outcome) and emergency planning, with local resilience work heavily focused on planning for a no-deal Brexit.

### 2020/21 Priorities

- 43 It is expected that the themes for the 2019/20 work priorities will remain broadly consistent with 2019/20, with a number of workstreams continuing into the new Board cycle. However, as noted, it is likely that part of the team's capacity will continue to be diverted to the Covid-19 response for the foreseeable future, which will impact other areas of team activity. This has been factored into the work plan below, and it is hoped that we may be able to provide a firmer outline in September.
- 44 The table below sets out some initial thinking on workstreams that will continue into the new Board cycle, subject to the Board's views:

Priority area	Proposed activity
Prevent, counter-extremism and cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support councils in their work to deliver the Prevent duty, counter-extremism and community cohesion, including through the provision of further training courses and events, facilitation of the Prevent Knowledge Hub, and the publication of further guidance and case studies.</li> <li>• Continue to lobby for further funding to support the work of the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE), and support its programme of work to respond to emerging extremism challenges, including through elected member networks, seminars and the online Knowledge Hub, and the SIGCE's working groups.</li> <li>• Support councils facing emerging cohesion and extremism issues arising from the pandemic, including developing case studies on responding to cohesion and integration challenges.</li> <li>• Collate and feedback sector views in response to: proposals for Prevent regionalisation; the Law Commission's review of hate crime; proposals for a new Protect duty; an updated Counter-Extremism strategy.</li> </ul>
Community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to make the case for greater investment in early intervention and preventions approaches to tackling domestic abuse and more effective intervention programmes. This will include lobbying on the Domestic Abuse Bill and Government's wider work on accommodation and support services for those impacted by domestic abuse.</li> <li>• Support councils in tackling serious violence and related issues such as county lines and run a series of webinars and events for councils.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the case for councils to be appropriately funded to support their work on modern slavery.</li> <li>• Hold a webinar session to share best practice on tackling anti-social behavior and continue to contribute to the Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board</li> <li>• Engage with government and support councils on a range of community safety issues, including gypsy and travellers and burglary.</li> <li>• Take forward work delayed from 2019/20 looking at resilience in community safety issues.</li> <li>• Publish guidance on the community trigger and public health approaches to serious violence.</li> <li>• Host a range of webinars and events for councils on community safety issues.</li> </ul>
Blue light services and civil resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We anticipated that there will be a range of resilience related work linked to the pandemic, including identifying learning and best practice, and working with councils to identify what changes councils would like to see to emergency management going forward.</li> </ul>
Licensing and regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby government to provide sustainable funding for vital public protection services and introduce a proper new burdens process that enables councils to increase/ invest in staff.</li> <li>• Lobby government to publish new statutory guidance for councils on taxi licensing as soon as possible and support council's with its implementation</li> <li>• Work with Home Office officials to explore an increase in licensing fees.</li> <li>• Deliver another Leadership Essentials course for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of licensing committees</li> </ul>
Support councils to respond to Grenfell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to participate in JRG, FPB and similar groups</li> <li>• Continue to host JIT</li> <li>• Lobby around passage of Fire Safety and Building Safety Bills</li> </ul>
Britain's exit from the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers will contribute to the LGA's work to support councils on any issues arising from Britain's exit from the EU.</li> </ul>
Crematoria, coroners and registrars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We anticipate that there will be a range of work related to resilience in the death management processes including crematoria and registrars' service.</li> <li>• Officers will continue to respond to the CMA investigation on the funerals market on aspects that affect local authorities</li> </ul>

45 The Board's views on any other areas they would like us to focus on would be very helpful.

**Implications for Wales**

- 46 We will work with colleagues at the Welsh LGA to identify areas where our work will be applicable to Wales, and where WLGA may wish to use our work as a basis for Welsh specific work of its own.

**Financial Implications**

- 47 None. The work priorities identified for 2020/21 will be delivered within the planned staffing budget and grant funding available from the LGA's MHCLG grant.

**Next steps**

- 48 The Board are asked to reflect on the work delivered this year, and consider and comment on their priorities for 2020/21.