

18 March 2021

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 members of the Board note and comment on the update.

Action

Officers to action any matters arising from the discussion as appropriate.

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Update Paper

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse Bill

1. The LGA [briefed](#) Peers ahead of the House of Lords Report Stages for the Domestic Abuse Bill, held on the 8th, 10th and 15th March 2021. During Report Stage, the Government tabled [several amendments](#), which will be of interest to local authorities. These included:
 - 1.1 Placing a duty on the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to publish a report within 12 months of commencement on the need for community-based domestic abuse services and on the provision of such services.
 - 1.2 Amending the provisions in Part 4 of the Bill (which place a duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation) to require local authorities to monitor any impact on the new duty on the provision of community-based support in their area.
 - 1.3 Requiring public authorities conducting domestic homicide reviews to send a copy of their completed reports to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.
2. It was positive to see the emphasis on the value of community-based support services during the final stages of the House of Lords debates. We will continue to work with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, councils and the domestic abuse support services to help secure greater investment in these early intervention and prevention services. We also welcome the changes to the Bill to share Domestic Homicide Reviews with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, and hope this prompts more shared learning at a national level.
3. In our LGA briefing, we welcomed the £19 million additional Government funding announced in the [Budget 2021](#), which includes £15 million for perpetrator programmes and £4 million to trial a network of 'Respite Rooms' across England. We will continue to work with the Government to confirm further details about these funding announcements.
4. We also welcomed the Government's [funding allocation](#) of £125 million for local authorities to implement the forthcoming statutory duty in the Domestic Abuse Bill. Following feedback from local authorities, we called for clarity on the level of funding

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to be made available in future years, and for a realistic and feasible timeline for local authorities to implement the new duty.

5. It is worth noting the Government has also committed to considering the work with perpetrators as part of the future Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021. The LGA has also been invited to join the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Perpetrator Strategic Group. We will provide feedback to the Board on progress made.
6. In addition to lobbying on the Domestic Abuse Bill, the LGA held a series of workshops with local authority officers in preparation for the new statutory duty on local authorities to deliver accommodation-based support and services. Over 400 delegates joined the workshop sessions and we have agreed a further two workshops with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in March 2021.

Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2021 – 2024)

7. The LGA submitted a [response](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on the development of the next Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), highlighting the need for this to align with other strategies and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Bill.
8. The Government's strategy (2021-2024) aims to focus on all forms of violence against women and girls and drive forward improvements in the effort to target perpetrators, placing victims and survivors at the heart of the approach, something the LGA supports.
9. We hope that the Strategy will consider the systemic barriers facing Black and minoritized women, migrant women, Deaf and disabled women, older women and LGBTQ+ survivors, as disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected.
10. In line with this Strategy, it is helpful the Government has published a Male Victims' Position Statement to help clarify and strengthen the response to male victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and so-called 'honour' based abuse. In our response, we indicated our support for the development of an updated Male Victims Position Statement, in line with the updated VAWG Strategy.

Serious Violent Crime

Serious violent crime funding

11. The Government [announced](#) £30 million additional funding would be made available to support the police to take targeted action in parts of England and Wales most

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affected by serious violence. £23 million funding for new early intervention programmes to help stop young people being drawn into violent crime, was also [announced](#). Wider detail about the funding made available for tackling serious violent crime can be [found here](#).

Offensive Weapons Homicide Review

12. In March 2021, the LGA held a webinar session with local government officers on the Government's plans to introduce Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews in the forthcoming Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. These reviews are expected to take place following deaths of adults where offensive weapons have been involved and will require local agencies and safeguarding partners to examine individual cases so future deaths are prevented.
13. The Government [announced](#) £1 million would be made available to set up and start the pilot for new homicide reviews, and a further £1.8 million will be available next year to continue the pilot into 2022 to 2023.

Serious Violence Reduction Orders

14. The Government has published its response to the consultation on Serious Violence Reduction Orders. The response confirms that Serious Violence Reduction Orders will be introduced as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill on the basis of a targeted pilot.

Unauthorised encampments

15. The Government has published its consultation response on strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. The Government intends to create a new criminal offence to target trespassers who intend to reside on any private or public land in vehicles without permission, and where they are causing significant disruption, distress or harm to local communities.
16. Police will be given powers to seize vehicles and arrest offenders. The measures are intended to target harmful encampments which reflect badly on the wider nomadic community as a whole, the majority of whom are law-abiding. The measures will be part of the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

Anti-social behaviour

Community Trigger

17. Vice-Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Cllr Bridget Smith, chaired a webinar on 'an introduction to the community trigger'. The webinar was attended by over 350 delegates, from a wide range of councils. Speakers included the Minister for Safeguarding Victoria Atkins MP (via video message), and guest

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speakers from the organisation ASB Help. Following the session, over 50 councils have signed the ASB pledge to improve the information available online relating to the community trigger. If you missed the LGA's webinar on the Community Trigger last week, you can find a copy of ASB's Help's [presentation here](#).

Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board

18. LGA officers attended the Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Advisory Board, convened in February 2021, to discuss current challenges facing all agencies in tackling anti-social behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. Representatives agreed to implement an action plan, with a focus on improving the response to anti-social behaviour, sharing best practice and raising awareness of the community trigger and wider resolutions. There were also discussions about a proposed 'Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week', which may be promoted later in the year.

Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner appointed

19. The Home Secretary has [appointed](#) Fraser Sampson as the Government's new independent Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner, replacing the two part time posts of the Biometrics Commissioner and Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

Counter-extremism

20. In January we began delivery of two training courses for local authority practitioners on engagement and communication strategies to counter far-right extremism. The courses are aimed at a developing understanding of: audience segmentation; the issues that far-right actors use to mobilise support; strategies to build greater resilience to far-right mobilisation; and how communications and community engagement might be applied locally to diffuse and contain far-right narratives. Officers from around 40 councils have signed up for the free online sessions.

21. In February we supported the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) to deliver a successful webinar on Balancing social media monitoring for community tensions and extremism against the protection of privacy. Cllr Dalton spoke at a further SIGCE event for members and officers in the East of England region, outlining the evolving extremism challenges facing local government and the continued need for national investment in work on countering extremism and building cohesion.

22. Following discussions at the last Board meeting on the pandemic and conspiracy theories, the LGA communications team ran a webinar on tackling vaccine hesitancy and misinformation earlier this month. [Presentations from the event will be available from the LGA website shortly](#). We have also been supporting work to commission

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some new guidance for elected members on online harms, which will include sections on misinformation, extremism and radicalisation as well as other harms such as child sexual and criminal exploitation, addiction and intimidation.

LGA Virtual Annual Licensing Conference

23. In February, Cllr Eric Allen and Cllr Kate Haigh chaired virtual sessions of the LGAs Annual Licensing Conference. The conference which ran over three days was attended by over 800 Members and officers. The conference covered a range of different areas of licensing with a particular focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the licenced trade and what recovery might look like. Speakers including Minister for taxis Baroness Vere of Norbiton and UK Hospitality Chief Executive Kate Nicholls with delegates also hearing from a number of councils who reflected on their experiences and shared good practice.

COVID-19

Compliance and enforcement

24. We have continued our regular engagement with MHCLG and the Department of Health and Social Care on compliance and enforcement issues, which has remained a key area of focus for the Government. Following the challenging and rapid moves through the tier system in December, the subsequent lockdown has presented a more limited but nevertheless consistent set of challenges linked to persistent non-compliance by some businesses; councils have used the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Disorder Act 2014 and Local Government Act 1972 to compel non-compliant businesses to close: we hosted a webinar in March for more than 400 officers to discuss some of these cases.

25. Additionally, there has been ongoing frustration around mixed use premises and the lack of powers to compel businesses to close parts of stores selling non-essential items. Following concerns raised about the risk of infection in supermarkets, councils responded to the Government's request to undertake targeted compliance activity in these premises.

26. With council officers, we highlighted to Government the compliance and enforcement challenges councils experienced under the previous regulations, and how the framework could be strengthened in the roadmap for reopening. Many of the more difficult issues have been addressed through the removal of the substantial meal requirement, curfew for hospitality businesses and the opportunity for tier tourism. We have continued to emphasise to Government the need for consistency between the legal framework and accompanying guidance, with as much information as

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possible included within the regulations to ensure that it is enforceable, and are hopeful that this will have been taken on board in the next iteration of the regulations.

27. Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has written to council leaders in March to set out government measures to support hospitality businesses to reopen safely from April 12, as part of the second stage of the roadmap out of lockdown. This includes an extension of the new pavement licensing framework for 12 months to September 2022. Pubs will also continue to be able to have marquees up without planning permission for up to two months. We are supportive of continued flexibility but continue to engage with the Government and councils, to contribute to the development of workable and helpful guidance, as well as to help shape any longer term changes the government wishes to explore.
28. Looking ahead, the process of reopening will undoubtedly increase the demands on councils. Of particular concern is the withdrawal of the dedicated compliance fund, which has been rolled into wider Contain funding, as councils have been clear that without maintenance of this funding they will be unable to maintain levels of resourcing that have been in place throughout the winter. There is also a concern at the likely demands placed on councils by multiple businesses wishing to stage local events as we move through reopening, and ensuring that councils have sufficient time to review plans and support businesses to ensure COVID secure events. We are engaging with the Government on both these issues.
29. The cross-governmental Regulatory Services Task and Finish Group convened by MHCLG in response to concerns raised by the LGA and others about the demands placed on environmental health and trading standards has identified five workstreams including developing a forward look of burdens on regulatory services; tackling backlogs; workforce capacity and qualifications; cost recovery and income generation, and a government champion for regulatory services. We will input into all of these areas and are taking a lead, jointly with the Office of Products Safety and Standards (OPSS), on the sourcing, capacity and qualifications' workstream. Each workstream will develop recommendations to take back to the wider Task and Finish Group.

Other COVID activity

30. Members of the team have also continued to support the LGA's activity in relation to the national shielding programme, with shielding advice in place since the start of the third national lockdown. As was the case during the November lockdown, there have been comparatively few requests for councils to provide direct food support to CEV people, reflecting the efforts made by councils over summer and autumn to assist people to find sustainable ways to access food during the pandemic. However, there

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were a significant number of requests for councils to support people who were shielding with basic care and support needs as well as general advice.

31. In February, the Government announced a significant expansion of the shielded population following an extensive piece of risk stratification work to identify factors that make people more vulnerable to COVID. The previous shielded list comprised 2.2m people and was based solely on the clinical conditions that individuals have. The updated list includes an additional 1.6m people identified on the basis of a combination of age, sex, ethnicity, body mass index and a range of clinical conditions which data suggests means they are at high risk from COVID-19. This cohort has also been advised to shield and added to the priority list for vaccinations, with members of the CEV group currently being invited for vaccines. To date, the increase has not prompted a significant increase in the numbers of the newly expanded cohort seeking support, although it has led to a number of queries and calls to council hubs and helplines.
32. The Government has also announced that it expects shielding to end by the end of March, by when it is expected that the CEV population will have been vaccinated. Councils have highlighted that they anticipate an ongoing role in supporting those who have been shielding to effectively re-engage with society following the requirement to shield for a substantial part of the past year.
33. We have also been contributing to the Government's work to develop a framework for non-financial, practical support for people required to self-isolate. This has been developed drawing on the experience of councils' work to provide the shielded group, and additional funding will be provided to enable a consistent

Modern slavery statements

34. On Thursday 11 March, the Government announced the launch of an online [registry](#) of modern slavery statements bringing together the transparency in supply chains (TISC) statements that businesses over a threshold of £36 million are required to produce annually. The registry was a commitment in the Governments TISC consultation, which is also expected to make it mandatory for councils with equivalent sized budgets to produce modern slavery statements. Led by the LGA's productivity team, the LGA has undertaken considerable work to support councils to produce voluntary statements as well as to the development of the registry, which will allow people to search and scrutinise the actions organisations are taking to identify and address modern slavery risks in their operations and supply chains.