

Supporting council improvement – annual report 2021/22



This report provides an overview and summary of highlights from our 2021/22 council improvement support programme.

Sector-led improvement
28 Jun 2022

Introduction

Councillor Peter Fleming OBE, Chair, LGA Improvement and Innovation Board:

"Now, more than ever, it is critical for local government to look to new solutions to continue to offer, and innovate, the vital services it provides to communities. In the last financial year, our sector improvement support programme has supported councils to deliver against some of the biggest challenges the local government sector has ever faced – including helping councils to manage the massive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to divert resources to help those most vulnerable. As Chair of the LGA Improvement and Innovation Board, it has been a privilege to help coordinate our sector improvement support programme and ensure that the voices of councils are represented across our programmes.

"Working on the Improvement and Innovation Board, my colleagues and I have witnessed the excellent work that the LGA does to support councils of all types across England and Wales with the particular issues they are facing.

"Our **peer support programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-improvement-and-peer-support/peer-challenge-and-remote-peer-support>] – which provides support, constructive challenges and recommendations to councils from our peers and others leading and working in the sector – continues to be at the heart of our unique offer to local authorities, backed up by successes over many years. The **peer challenge process** helps councils to understand 'where they are' and develop plans for challenges ahead, empowering them to achieve improvement across their services. We have seen our peer support programme go from strength to strength in offering councils the support they tell us they need most. This support takes many forms – from extensive financial guidance, to training on priority challenges such as climate change and efficient procurement, to our work developing leaders of the local government sector, to the critical support we provide to help councils tackle exceptional circumstances such as the **COVID-19 pandemic** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-council-information-and-support>] and the **issues emerging from the tragedy in Ukraine** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/communities/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/ukraine-council-information>].

“ Seeing councils utilising our support to improve their service delivery and offer better outcomes for residents illustrates the value of our sector support programme and the impact it can have.

"This report outlines what the LGA has achieved through our sector improvement support programme over the past year. Below are some key achievements I want to highlight:

- Councils continued to reap significant benefits from engaging with our improvement support. 99 per cent of **chief executives**, 96 per cent of **directors** and 91 per cent of **council leaders** stated that our improvement support had resulted in **positive impacts for their local authorities**.
- We engaged more than 2,000 councillors in our **training and development opportunities**.

- 97 per cent of officers, and 90 per cent of senior councillors, stated that our improvement support (including peer support, training and mentoring) had been useful to them.
- We delivered 134 **peer challenges** or **remote peer support programmes** to councils across all regions, helping those councils to drive improvements and address challenges across a range of work areas including corporate capacity, finance, leadership and governance.
- We provided support to every council that experienced a **change of political leadership** following the May 2021 local elections. Feedback about this support was extremely positive, with 95 per cent of respondents saying that our post-election support helped their council.
- 100 per cent of councils stated that support provided through our **financial resilience programme** had a positive impact on them.
- Over 4,000 graduates applied to take part in our **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/national-graduate-development-programme>], with 177 of those being placed in councils across all regions in England and Wales.
- 98.5 per cent of councils have now engaged with our **Climate Change Programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub>]. 95 per cent of the councils who responded to our survey indicated that the programme has had a positive impact on their council.
- 97 per cent of respondents said that our **Housing Advisers Programme (HAP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/housing-advisers-programme>] either had, or likely will have, a lasting positive impact on their council's capacity to deliver housing and homelessness services, rough sleeping provision, and place-making; and 100 per cent of respondents said that the programme had a positive impact overall.

"I could not sign off without stating how much of a pleasure it has been to serve as Chair of the LGA Innovation and Improvement Board and to see, first-hand, how the LGA helps the local government sector. It has been a privileged position that continues to teach me so much about the excellent work local government is doing and the new ideas that will drive it forward. As my time as Chair comes to an end, I will continue to work with the LGA to help support its ambition to improve services across all councils. I am delighted, therefore, to present this annual report illustrating the highlights of our sector improvement support programme in 2021/22."

Background

Throughout the 2021/22 financial year, our sector improvement support programme provided councils with essential tools and resources – supporting them to respond to opportunities, address complex challenges, and facilitate continuous improvement within local government. This report provides a summary of our sector improvement support activity that was funded by the 2021/22 improvement grant we received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It outlines what was delivered – and evidences the significant positive impacts made across the local government sector – during the 2021/22 financial year.

Our sector improvement support programme is guided by a 'sector-led improvement' (SLI) approach, which recognises that the responsibility of local government improvement should remain with councils. Our sector-led improvement approach is underpinned by the key principles that:

- councils are responsible for their own performance
- councils are accountable locally, not nationally
- councils have a sense of collective responsibility for the performance of the local government sector
- the role of the Local Government Association is to provide effective tools and support to councils to enable them to drive improvement, and to maintain an overview of the performance of the sector.

We fulfil our role of supporting councils by offering a suite of improvement opportunities which we know deliver impactful outcomes for local authorities. In 2021/22, we delivered valuable programmes supporting councils to improve, develop leadership capacity, make data-informed decisions, and build capacity and capability – which included the sharing of good practice. This enabled councils to address the live and emerging issues which faced the sector, including challenges linked to **COVID-19**, **climate change**, and **refugee resettlement**.

Our sector improvement support programme was:

- shaped through direct engagement with councils to ensure that they had the support they most needed to improve and respond to a wide range of issues and opportunities
- developed with an understanding of central Government goals, to ensure it empowers councils to 'level up' communities across all areas.

To find out about our **2022/23 sector support offer for councils** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/sector-support-offer-2022-23>], please contact the **principal adviser** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers>] for your region.

In addition to the programmes funded by the DLUHC improvement grant covered in this report, we offer further improvement support through our **children's services improvement** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/childrens-services-improvement>] programme and **Care and Health Improvement Programme (CHIP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/care-and-health-improvement>] (adult social care and public health), funded by other Government departments, alongside other improvement programmes including our **cyber security, digital and technology** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/digital/cyber-security>] and **One Public Estate (OPE)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate>] programmes and our **Planning Advisory Service (PAS)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/planning-advisory-service>].

Programme delivery outline

This report illustrates the considerable impact delivered through our sector improvement support programme in 2021/22. For the purposes of this report, we have categorised our support activity into the following four core themes:

Council improvement and peer support

Our **peer challenge and remote peer support** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-improvement-and-peer-support/peer-challenge-and-remote-peer-support>] programmes provided councils with essential tools and resources to facilitate improvement. We provided 'post local election' support to councils as well as bespoke and targeted support for councils who were facing unique or enhanced challenges or **changes in political leadership** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/changes-political-leadership>]. Our **research and data** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research-and-data>] programme, including our free **data benchmarking platform LG Inform** [<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>], equipped councils with tools to increase their service delivery capabilities and champion data-informed decision-making.

Leadership, workforce and communications

We delivered an extensive array of **leadership development opportunities** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/highlighting-political-leadership>] for both councillors and council officers. Our programmes supporting councils with **workforce challenges** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support>], and **communications strategy** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/comms-hub-communications-support>], enabled local leaders to maximise their capacity and reach to achieve positive outcomes for their communities.

Financial resilience and economic recovery

Local authorities have faced additional challenges in recent years from several high-profile issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Our programmes covering **financial support** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/finance-improvement>], **procurement and commissioning** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/procurement>], cyber, digital and technology (including our **LGA Cyber 360** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/lga-cyber-360>] and **digital inclusion resources** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/digital/four-essential-steps-digital-inclusion>]); and **behavioural insights** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/behavioural-insights>] supported councils to manage the impacts of these challenges, handle increased demand on services, and continue to drive improvement. We continued to offer bespoke support for those councils who were most in need.

Safer and more sustainable communities

Councils play a vital role as community leaders. They ensure that communities are safe and that council services are sustainable and meet the needs of residents. The support we provided through our **Climate Change Programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub>], and our **Housing Advisers Programme (HAP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/housing-advisers-programme>], enabled councils to adapt their approaches to achieve local targets. We also provided support, resources and tools relating to **devolution** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/devolution-hub>], **equality, diversity and**

inclusion [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-consultancy/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-hub>]; and **rough sleeping** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/rough-sleeping-peer-support>]; which helped councils to develop and improve impactful approaches to benefit their local communities.

Council improvement and peer support



Highlights

- We delivered **134 peer challenges or programmes of remote peer support** to councils across all regions of England and Wales.
- **100 per cent** of councils participating in an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge said the process had a positive impact on their councils.
- **95 per cent** of all respondents receiving post-election support said the support helped their council.

Our **council improvement and peer support** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-improvement-and-peer-support>] programme allowed councils to harness their potential and respond to key challenges. We provided access to a wide range of peer challenges, as well as bespoke and remote peer support options, delivered by peers and our **expert regional teams** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers>]. The range of on-site and remote options we offered in 2021/22 meant that support remained flexible, adaptable and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. Our **research and data** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research-and-data>] programme complemented this support by giving councils increased capability to measure their impact and take a data-orientated approach to service delivery.

Peer challenge and remote peer support

Our **peer challenge and remote peer support** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-improvement-and-peer-support/peer-challenge-and-remote-peer-support>] programme provided councils with a unique opportunity to engage with chief executive, and councillor, peers with current or previous experience in the sector. Peers provide challenge, support and guidance through peer-led reviews of specific areas or issues such as finance, governance, communications and equalities.

“ Peer challenges play a valuable role in supporting councils to continuously improve their services. They are undertaken in a collaborative and constructive way that enables the sharing of learning and best practice. We have benefited from peer challenges on planning, and legal and governance, and would highly recommend the process.

– Birmingham City Council

Our peer challenges and remote peer support were highly utilised in 2021/22, helping councils to drive improvements and address challenges across areas including corporate capacity, finance, leadership and governance. We delivered 134 peer challenges and programmes of remote peer support to councils across all regions of England and Wales, including through our **Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/peer-challenges/peer-challenges-we-offer/corporate-peer-challenges>] programme.

CPCs are a highly valued and effective tool of support and a cornerstone of our sector support offer. They take place on-site and support councils to improve across areas including local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership governance and culture, financial planning and management, and capacity for improvement. From 2021/22, all CPCs included follow-up reviews, providing councils with a further opportunity to reflect and take stock of their progress.

Case study: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Cambridgeshire County Council [<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>] was one of the first councils to undertake an **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/peer-challenges/peer-challenges-we-offer/corporate-peer-challenges>] in the 2021/22 financial year. The initial CPC reviewed previous recommendations, and developed further recommendations, across areas including: finance, governance arrangements, capacity and capability, and ensuring greater clarity about shared services arrangements. The council had its progress review in March 2022. A thematic approach was taken on three of the most strategically important and impactful areas: finance and budget strategy, shared services, and place-shaping with partners.

The process allowed time and space for the council to reflect on progress, associated impacts, and next steps. Peers asked questions to help them understand impacts and offer feedback, and made suggestions to drive progress.

The progress review highlighted that the initial CPC had prompted the following impacts:

- the appointment of a dedicated chief executive for the county council
- a focus on financial planning and budget setting by the joint administration of the council
- provision of greater direction to staff around the future delivery of shared services
- consideration of future place-shaping governance
- a review of the council's political management arrangements and committee system.

The process was seen as valuable both by councillors and senior officers.

“ We were really delighted with the effectiveness of the Corporate Peer Challenge. The experience and expertise which the peers brought into our council was amazing, and the opportunity to work with them has been enormously valuable. The benefit of having an outside view of our council across a wide area has been very thought-provoking, and the ongoing engagement with the LGA has also been great.

– Cambridgeshire County Council Leader, Councillor Julie Nethsinga

Although COVID-19 restrictions meant that we were not able to provide face-to-face support until July 2021, more than half of all the peer challenges we carried out were CPCs.

As indicated by comments below, feedback from councils participating in our Corporate Peer Challenge programme has been highly positive. A survey of councils undergoing CPCs highlighted that 100 per cent of councils said that the process of preparing for and participating in a CPC had positively impacted their council.

Senior officer and councillor peers involved in peer challenges and other bespoke and remote support also reported high levels of satisfaction in participating in the programme – as highlighted by the following comments:

Reflections from councils on the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge programme:

“The insightful, balanced and objective feedback and recommendations for services and approaches for us to work on that the CPC team provided us with have genuinely helped us to make our services better, our systems more efficient and our councillor / officer working relationships more effective. For me, one of the key strengths of the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge process is that it is undertaken by councillors who are current members of the 'local government family' who truly understand the sector we operate in and who bring a real depth of experience, knowledge and skills with them... I would thoroughly recommend to any council that has either never undertaken a CPC, or has not undertaken one recently, arranges one in the near future.”

– Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

“The peers brought us valuable challenge which highlighted the strengths we have as an organisation, but also provided constructive feedback on some areas where there is still room for us to improve. The process was very well managed with excellent support throughout. It's been a valuable exercise for all of us and one I would recommend to other authorities.”

– Lancashire County Council

“These Corporate Peer Challenges play an important role for our sector – sharing knowledge, learning and best practice to drive improvement and innovation through the local government family. This is so important if the sector is to remain best-placed to support our communities and deliver effectively as leaders of place.”

– Telford & Wrekin Council

“Two things [about LGA CPCs] stand out for me. Firstly, how well the peer team – which is drawn from all corners of the country – comes together to share knowledge, experience and insight during an intense period. The second is that despite us all sharing the same statutory framework, how different each authority is by virtue of the people, place, and priorities. [CPCs provide] a rare opportunity to inquire and to challenge in a constructive way but also to reflect and to learn.

– East Devon District Council

We are committed to ensuring that officer and member peers bring diverse and varied voices to our support offer. We continue to identify ways to ensure diversity among peers. In 2021/22, 300 peers supported the delivery of our Corporate Peer Challenge programme. We encourage those working in senior leadership roles across local government to find out more about **becoming a peer** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/become-a-peer>].

Peer reflections

“The CPC acts as a critical friend while, at the same time, allowing peers to develop their own learning about other local authorities. The learning and good practice enables the local government sector to continuously improve – this is possible through the non-threatening and collaborative manner in which the CPCs are carried out.”

– Kirklees Council

“By taking part in the review, I learned skills that I could take back to my own authority... The Corporate Peer Challenge process teaches you to give things a shake and see what falls out – and what does is really interesting.”

– Eastleigh Borough Council

“Being a peer is a fantastic opportunity to learn from other authorities, expand your knowledge, and also enable to time to reflect on best practice. I feel that anyone can be a peer – we all have different skills and experience to bring to the table. I found it to be an extremely rewarding, challenging and, yet, fun process to be part of and would highly recommend it.

– Elmbridge Borough Council

“The privilege of being invited into another authority and learning how they tackle and challenge many of the same issues that your own authority faces cannot be underestimated. The shared learning and constructive challenge really enables you and the host authority to see the different approaches and opens your eyes to the possibility that doing things differently really can work well.”

– Breckland Council

“Being a peer is a great privilege as it involves being welcomed into a council to hold up a mirror to them and play back their strengths as well as to highlight the challenges and areas for improvement they should consider. It is an opportunity not only to contribute and share learning, but also to take away examples of great practice. The chance to work with colleagues from the LGA and councils across the country just adds to the richness of the experience.”

– Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Post-election support

We provide councils with access to support following local elections. We offer targeted support to councils experiencing changes in political control or political leadership. In 2021/22, all councils that experienced a change in political control were offered post-election support, with 29 councils (82 per cent) taking up support such as top team development sessions, mentoring and officer and / or member development sessions including induction events for new members, and other forms of post-election support. Feedback was extremely positive, with 95 per cent of all respondents receiving post-election support saying that it helped their council.

We supported councils through these transition periods and beyond by promoting the range of resources and opportunities we offer on our new **changes in political leadership hub** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/changes-political-leadership>]. More than 30 councils experiencing a change of leader and / or portfolio holder without any change in political control also benefited from our post-election support and mentoring.

A councillor reflects on our post-election support

“I am delighted to say that [the support] has been both extensive and very beneficial. As a new cabinet with a considerable number of first-time councillors, we have all benefited from signing up to a myriad of courses... We were given invaluable support and guidance by the LGA, and the LGA councillor lead, around key issues as well as the brokering of relationships with other councils with a shared experience. This was most enlightening... I would urge all councils and councillors to make full use of the LGA and the expertise it possesses. I feel confident in saying our local authority will become more effective, and individual councillors better informed, as a result of developing our relationship with the LGA.”

– Councillor Bryan Jones, Cannock Chase District Council

Research and data

Being able to access and analyse research and data on council performance, demographics, and live trends and issues, is critical to ensuring high quality services and informed decision-making in local government. In 2021/22, we supported councils to access the tools and resources they needed to achieve this through our research and data programme, which includes our **free data benchmarking platform – LG Inform** [<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>] – and our analytics-focused training and development opportunities.

COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT AND PEER SUPPORT



927,000

Our free **data benchmarking platform**
LG Inform received over **927,000 page views**

Highlights

- **LG Inform** received ‘**Highly Commended**’ awards at both the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) Awards and the Analysis in Government Awards – in its 10th anniversary year (2021).
- **LG Inform** received more than **927,000 page views** and reached the milestone of **four million total views** since 2013.

LG Inform – our free data benchmarking platform

LG Inform uniquely integrates thousands of local-level data items in a single system and is free for councils and fire and rescue services to access.

In 2021/22, LG Inform continued to provide current performance data relating to councils and local areas, and we launched new **LG Inform themed data reports** [<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/themed-reports>] in response to live issues. New reports visualised data on Ukrainian settlement in England, greenhouse gas accounting, homelessness, childhood immunisations, local digital skills, and on Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman annual statistics on complaints, decisions, uphold rates, and remedy and compliance outcomes.

We also updated LG Inform themed data reports on key financial indicators, children in need and care, special educational needs and disability (SEND), children’s health and wellbeing, and police-recorded crime – helping to ensure that councils had access to the current data they needed.

In recognition of its continued valuable contribution to the local government sector, in 2021 – its tenth anniversary year – LG Inform received a ‘Highly Commended’ award in both the **Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) Awards** [<https://www.laria.org.uk/professional-development/awards/>] and the **Analysis in Government Awards** [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/analysis-in-government-awards-2021-shortlist>].

LG Inform was widely utilised by the sector in 2021/22, achieving more than 927,000 views during this financial year alone.

Spotlight on: COVID-19 workforce data

Our workforce data supported service delivery in councils throughout the pandemic. Our monthly COVID-19 workforce data collection provided the single national source on how the sector responded during the pandemic. The data, collected directly from heads of human resources across local government, provided timely, reliable, and comprehensive information on staffing numbers, reasons for staff absences, capacity to run services, and contingency and mitigation methods. Councils were able to access regular COVID-19 workforce survey research reports, and **interactive and comparative charts, tables and trend data on LG Inform** [<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/covid-19-case-tracker>].

Advanced and Predictive Analytics Network (APAN) for local government data practitioners

With councils moving to adopt more intelligent data systems, we established the **Advanced and Predictive Analytics Network (APAN) and online hub** [<https://khub.net/web/lg-apan#:~:text=The%20Advanced%20%26%20Predictive%20Analytics%20Network,analytics%20in%20local%20government%2>]. In 2021/22, the hub provided a forum for data analysts and data scientists in local government to meet, share and learn from each other, focusing on the rapidly changing techniques for collecting and analysing data to inform council decision-making. Data practitioners reported that support offered through the hub helped them to gain “clear insight into some of the practicalities and impact of undertaking this work” and provided a “comprehensive and inspiring look at what is possible, particularly around access and sharing of data”.

Leadership, workforce and communications



Our Leadership, Workforce, and Communications, programmes offered extensive support and empowered local government leaders to develop new skills, increase their capacity and maximise their impact.

Leadership development

Highlights

- 99 per cent of councillors who participated in our **Leadership Essentials** programme thought it would help them carry out their role.
- 177 graduates were placed in councils as part of our **National Graduate Development Programme**.
- We offered bespoke support to underrepresented groups to support their development as leaders including hosting events for **BAME and LGTBQ+ councillors**, and providing coaching for disabled councillors.
- 100 per cent of all councillors who took part in the **Next Generation** programme and responded to our survey learned practical skills they could use in their role – 97 per cent of these councillors said the programme would help them carry out their role.

Effective leadership in local government is critical to delivering the vital services and plans necessary to drive improvement in communities. The LGA takes an active role in identifying and developing a diverse range of talent to empower them to deliver their visions as leaders of place and increase leadership capacity across all councils. In the last year, we have provided extensive

support to councillors and council officers to help them meet their leadership and management potential.

“ What a difference you are making to councils of all flavours across the country – I can’t help but feel awed by that as an achievement. The six days have made a real difference to my confidence in leading.

– Councillor reflecting on our Leadership Academy

Political leadership and councillor support

Our political leadership and councillor support programmes provided comprehensive support to councillors, and aspiring councillors, in 2021/22. Our **Leadership Academy** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-academy>] – our flagship development programme for councillors who are already in leadership positions – was delivered to 76 senior councillors who each undertook three modules covering subjects including relationship-building, complex change, and communication. A survey of Leadership Academy participants indicated that the programme had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role. Among many positive reflections, one participant noted it had helped them “to better understand how I work, how to refine my ideas and to think more strategically about longer term career options”, while also giving them “confidence that I belong in [my council] and can make a change.”

Our **Leadership Essentials** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials>] programme comprised a series of events and workshops designed as themed learning opportunities for councillors, each focused on different portfolio areas including children’s services, finance, and climate change. A survey of over 100 participants who took part in the Leadership Essentials programme in 2021/22 indicated that 99 per cent of them felt that the programme had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role.

“ It has given me a palpable sense of a national network of people involved in similar challenges. I've learned from the experience of others and have proactively sought out follow-up learning as a result, including through an LGA mentor with whom I've recently established contact.

– Leadership Essentials participant

These programmes were supplemented with the launch of new **e-learning modules** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/councillor-development/councillor-e-learning>] on topics including biodiversity, economic growth, data protection, equality, diversity and inclusion, and the Councillor Code of Conduct.

We have committed ourselves to ensure ensuring greater inclusivity within our Leadership programme to benefit individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. We are proud to say that the proportion of councillors from BAME backgrounds participating in our senior level programmes has increased to 15 per cent and that, for the first time ever, our **Leadership Academy** programme was attended by more women (52 per cent) than men.

“ Can I thank you for a really great, interesting, inspiring course? I am a new councillor and this was my first LGA event – I can’t imagine how difficult it was to work out how to present through zoom but you did it spot on.

– Councillor reflecting on our Leadership Essentials programme

We continued to promote the vital role of councillors through our **Be a Councillor campaign** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor>], identifying diverse and talented individuals and encouraging them to become councillors to make a difference in their local communities. Our **Focus on Leadership events** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/highlighting-political-leadership>] provided councillors with a series of networking opportunities to build valuable relationships with peers from across the country. 2021/2022 events included a BAME Councillor Weekender, Effective

Opposition for Opposition Leaders and Deputy Leaders, and an LGBTQ+ Councillor Weekender. We introduced focused support for disabled councillors in their role as community leaders and confirmed coaching agreements between disabled councillors (including experienced councillors) and professional coaches, with plans in place to expand this offer significantly in 2022/23.

Our **Next Generation** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/next-generation>] programme offered ambitious and talented councillors an unparalleled political development opportunity to further their political careers as champions of local government. Our 2021/22 programme provided support and training to a select group of talented and ambitious councillors across the political spectrum. Modules focused on three key areas including personal leadership, political leadership and communication and media skills. Next Generation is a highly valued and impactful programme, with all those who participated this year indicating they learned practical skills they could utilise and 97 per cent stating it would help them carry out their role. Contributing to the success of this programme is that it is uniquely developed within party political traditions, with support from party political experts and the LGA Independent Group.

“ I couldn't recommend the Next Generation programme more. I learned lots of things that I can put into practice immediately to help me be a better councillor – from public speaking to shaping policy.

– Councillor's feedback on our Next Generation programme

Managerial Leadership Development Programme for council officers

Our Managerial Leadership Development Programme has continued to promote and enhance talent in local government from graduate to chief executive level. In 2021/22, through our work in partnership with **Solace** [<https://solace.org.uk/>], our networking events, and our graduate programme, we empowered council officers to further their careers, improve their capabilities and operate more confidently.

LEADERSHIP, WORKFORCE AND COMMUNICATIONS



177

We placed **177 graduates** into councils as part of our **National Graduate Development Programme**.

We continued to run the **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/national-graduate-development-programme>] – our highly competitive flagship management development programme, which attracts and identifies the brightest and best graduates and adds capacity to the sector by placing them in councils across the country. In 2021/22, over 4,000 candidates applied to be a part of the programme with 177 graduates being placed in councils. The LGA is committed to ensuring that future leaders reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. 30 per cent of those who reached the interview stage from the most recent cohort were from a BAME background.

We partnered with Solace to create a pipeline of talented managerial leaders for the sector and to help individuals achieve their potential. This was achieved through our successful **IGNITE** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/officer-development/ignite-solace-leadership-programme-chief-executives>] programme which supports chief executives to further develop their understanding of an increasingly complex environment. We received extremely positive feedback about this programme from chief executives with 100 per cent of those who were surveyed last year indicating they felt more confident in their ability to carry out their role having participated in our IGNITE programme. In addition, we collaborated with Solace to offer **Total Leadership** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/officer-development/lga-and-solace-group>], a programme for senior executive staff aspiring to be chief executives, from a range of backgrounds, to further develop

their leadership approach. We also offered **Springboard** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/officer-development/lga-and-solace-group>], our fast-track programme for head-of-service level managers identified as rising stars in the public sector and who are seeking to move upwards.

“ From beginning to end the programme was excellent, enabling me through coaching, formal sessions, networking and meeting public leaders, to determine the next steps in my public leadership journey.

– Total Leadership participant

Workforce and HR support

Highlights

- We launched our **'Diverse by Design' guide to equality, diversity and inclusion** and hosted a series of accompanying webinars which were attended by over **1,000 delegates with 95 per cent satisfied or very satisfied** with the webinars.
- Key support to councils offered around **apprenticeships** including health checks to assess where they are on their apprenticeship journey and expert surgeries to provide specialist guidance.
- We provided **bespoke workforce support to 55 councils** to aid their approach to talent management, recruitment and retention, and addressing skills gaps.

Our Workforce programme continued to provide critical support and guidance to local authorities to ensure they had the workforce and corporate capacity and capability to deliver for their communities. Our activity in this area included providing support to address recruitment and retention issues, sharing of good practice, and providing targeted support for organisations who were facing enhanced challenges.

During, and emerging from, the pandemic, we provided timely information and resources to councils and shared good practice and advice on key considerations and ways they could approach returning to 'a new business as usual' and navigating the world of 'hybrid' working. We ran a series of hybrid working roundtables which engaged 135 councils, sharing lessons learned to help revise policy, practice and procedures. We launched an organisational development practitioner network with councils – and 140 individuals – who participated in a series of online network sessions to help embed this practice.

Our **apprenticeships programme** [<https://local.gov.uk/apprenticeship-support-programme>] went from strength to strength in 2021/22. We carried out apprenticeship health checks, providing reviews for councils to assess where they are on their apprenticeship journey and how they can improve their approach to achieve greater results. We also held expert surgeries, which provide councils with the opportunity to discuss their approach with our apprenticeships adviser on any aspect of their programme.

We launched **'Diverse by Design'** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/diverse-design>], our comprehensive guide to equality, diversity and inclusion, to support improved workforce diversity and more inclusive practices and behaviours within councils. This work was supported by a series of webinars run jointly with the **Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas)** [<https://www.acas.org.uk/>], covering inclusive leadership, carers in the workplace, creating gender equal workplaces, the menopause, and disability at work. Over 1,000 delegates booked to attend the series and feedback showed that 95 per cent of delegates were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the webinars.

“ I cannot praise highly enough the support that the LGA Workforce team has provided to Torbay Council in the last two years. They have worked closely with our senior managers and HR team. Their support, challenges, knowledge, and sharing of best practice, has been fundamental in getting the council’s senior leaders and managers to really think about what workforce planning is, and how it can help the council move forward and plan effectively for the future.

– Anne-Marie Bond, Chief Executive of Torbay Council

Our support on employment law continued with our monthly publication of our Employment Law Advisory Bulletin. We provided bespoke support to councils on topics including COVID-19 guidance in the workplace and exit pay reform. Over 200 delegates joined our annual Employment Law Conference in March.


Our Workforce Planning programme continued to grow during 2021/22. We supported 55 councils to consider their approach to talent management, recruitment and retention, and addressing skills gaps.

Communications and community engagement

Highlights

- **100 per cent** of councils undertaking a communications health check said that the support they received through this process had a positive impact on their council.
- By the end of 2021/22, our **Crisis Communications Cohort** – our network supporting fellow communications teams during times of crisis – had grown to **87 councillors**.
- **95 per cent** of attendees at our communications webinars said that these events have provided them with information that they will make use of within their authority.

LEADERSHIP, WORKFORCE AND COMMUNICATIONS



100%

100 per cent of councils undertaking a **communications health check** said that the support had a positive impact on their councils

Whether it’s to encourage greater self-service or promote understanding of local priorities, effective communication has the power to engage communities, challenge misconceptions and support councils to achieve their objectives. Our Communications and Community Engagement programme supports councils to lead more successfully by providing them with tools, knowledge and resources to enable them to engage and communicate more effectively with their communities..

In 2021/22, we delivered a range of **communications support** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/comms-hub-communications-support>] including media training, support in developing place and brand narratives, and bespoke remote communications support. Our communications peer challenges and communications health checks provided councils the opportunity to receive a peer-reviewed check of their communications strategy and function, with 100 per cent of participating councils stating that their communications health check had resulted in a positive impact.

Our communications support also helped to support greater resilience for councils with the establishment of a Crisis Communications cohort – bringing together council communications teams, including 87 communications leaders, who are prepared to provide support to fellow communications teams during times of crisis.

Further support and resources were provided through our webinar programme. We hosted a range of events topics of importance to councils and their communications teams throughout the year, with feedback showing that at least 95 per cent of participants saying that these webinars have provided them with information that they will use their authority. Our [e-bulletins](https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/e-bulletins) [https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/e-bulletins] and updated guidance provided councils with another key source of information. [New Conversations 2.0](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/new-conversations-20-lga-guide-engagement) [https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/new-conversations-20-lga-guide-engagement], our refreshed guide to community engagement, provided councils with a particularly important tool covering good practice in community engagement, how councillors can communicate with communities more effectively, engaging with different groups, using different platforms for communications, and other topics.

Financial resilience and economic recovery



Our [financial resilience](https://local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/finance-improvement) [https://local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/finance-improvement] and [economic recovery](https://local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/economic-growth-support-hub) [https://local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/economic-growth-support-hub] programmes helped local authorities to manage enhanced challenges facing the sector, and to continue to drive improvement.

Finance support programme

Highlights

- A recent survey of councils accessing our finance support programme showed that **100 per cent of respondents** said that the support they received through the programme had helped their council.
- We established **new forums for audit committee chairs** in eight of our nine regions and provided further support to the existing London forum.

Increased demand for services and mounting economic pressures has meant that councils have faced heightened financial pressures in recent years. Effective financial leadership and sustainable financial management are more critical than ever. Our 2021/22 finance support programme has, therefore, focused on providing councils with support and cultivating their skills to respond to financial challenges. We provided targeted support for those councils most in need.

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY



100%

100 per cent of councils responding to our survey after accessing our **Finance Support Programme** said it had assisted their council

Financial resilience programme

In 2021/22, more than 50 councils received direct support through our financial resilience programme. For example, we worked with a number of councils to achieve capitalisation directions and provide emergency financial support. A core element of our support was provided by our financial improvement and sustainability advisors (FISAs) – former local authority chief finance officers who provide advice and insight to councils, in particular, to those councils who are facing enhanced financial challenges. In 2021/22, FISAs provided valuable support to more than 40 councils, with 100 per cent of respondents stating the support had helped their council. Feedback from councils that have drawn on this support underlines the value of our FISA support offer. One Chief Financial Officer commented that LGA FISAs had “provided the right balance of support and challenge, providing valuable information and advice, and a solid sounding board for the issues faced and how we can approach these as a council.”

Our wider financial resilience programme, supported by expert regional teams, helped councils to deliver a range of improvements. A review of our 2021/22 support shows that support from and advice from regional teams and FISAs has enabled councils to build greater financial resilience through mechanisms including financial scenario planning, mentoring, and capacity building exercises. In this way, we supported councils to improve their financial circumstances, including through budget-setting and management of reserves.

Developing financial skills

Our finance support continued to be shaped in consultation with the sector, including via input from a newly established **sounding board** of chief financial officers that has served to take the pulse of the sector and ensure that the support we provide is in line with councils’ needs.

Our training and development programmes strengthened councils’ skills and capabilities. We hosted a series of webinars and workshops on issues relating to finance and audit. For example, we ran budget setting workshops to support cabinet members to understand budgetary issues and how to develop financial plans that respond to them. We continued to deliver our **Leadership Essentials** programme for leaders and finance portfolio holders, and its sister programme for audit committee chairs. We created a new programme for non-finance portfolio holders and established eight new regional forums for audit committee chairs (while also providing support to the existing forum in London) to ensure full coverage across England. These forums provided opportunities for audit committee chairs to discuss wider audit issues and share learning and best practice, and they will continue to be supported to identify effective audit measures into the future.

Economic growth

Highlights

- All respondents said that the **Economic Growth Advisers Programme** provided their council with skills to increase its capacity to address local economic challenges.
- We published **53 economic growth cases studies** to share good practice and learning across the sector.

Economic recovery and renewal has remained a pressing concern for local authorities, in particular, following the impact of COVID-19. In 2021/22, our **economic growth improvement offer** focused on building the capacity, skills and confidence – of councillors and officers – to aid their role in rebuilding local economies post-pandemic.

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY



53

We published **53 economic growth case studies** to share good practice and learning across the local government sector

In 2021/22, we delivered two **Economic Growth Leadership Essentials** programmes to support councillors in their economic development role. We also designed and published our 'Introduction to economic development' e-learning module for councillors and officers. Our **Economic Growth Design skills programme** supported councils to apply 'design-thinking' to their local economic challenges. All participating officers who were surveyed stated that the tools from this programme that they had used, had made a positive impact on their work.

“ The community insight gained through the Economic Growth Design Skills programme has enabled us to work up our business case for a green skills academy that has attracted £500,000 of funding.

– Economic Growth Design Skills programme participant

Our **Economic Growth Advisers (EGA) Programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/economic-growth-support-hub/advisers-programme>] delivered support and additional capacity to councils to tackle local economic growth challenges. The EGA programme offered specialist bespoke advice and support to local authorities, to help them deliver economic growth in their area. Highlights of this work included supporting councils to:

- promote local creative industries
- help young people start up their own businesses
- make better use of the visitor economy.

All respondents to our impact survey said that the programme provided their council with skills to increase its capacity to address local economic challenges.

To share learning across councils, we published **53 case studies** relating to economic growth on our **economic growth support hub** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/economic-growth-support-hub>]. We delivered webinars and roundtables on the topics of:

- public and private partnerships post-pandemic
- the long-term resilience of our high streets
- lessons learned from business engagement during the pandemic
- green recovery
- upskilling young people
- the visitor economy.

Procurement and commissioning programme

Highlights

- We provided over 100 officers with training on **The Sourcing Playbook** – outlining good practice for local authorities in relation to sourcing goods and services.
- We provided urgent support to councils relating to the **approach to Russian suppliers** following the invasion of Ukraine.
- Our **National Social Value Conference** was attended by more than 1,400 people from around the world.

Effective procurement and commissioning has never been more important to councils. Increased demand for public services, heightened costs of delivery, and reduced resources, mean that local authorities must look at innovative solutions to improve their efficiency to continue to deliver for their communities. Our **Procurement and Commissioning Programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/procurement>] offered a wide range of support to councils in 2021/22 to enable them to improve their practices in the face of rising costs and demand.

In 2021/22, the programme facilitated networks of procurement and commissioning officers to share good practice and develop solutions to shared challenges collaboratively. Our **Construction** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/construction-procurement-hub>], **Adults'** and **Children's** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-improvement-and-peer-support/childrens-services-improvement>] networks continued to thrive via their quarterly meetings. In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we quickly

set up a network of those councils procuring energy from Gazprom to help them to network and support each other on calls for the public sector to exit contracts with Russian entities. 54 councils have been involved in these weekly meetings, which will continue into 2022/23.

We were heavily involved in organising national conferences and learning opportunities, which we promoted across our procurement networks. The 2021 online **Local Government Procurement Expo** was attended by 114 council officers. Our **LGA Construction Conference** attracted 296 officers, with over 90 per cent stating they were satisfied with the event. The 2021 online **National Social Value** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/procurement/achieving-community-benefits>]. **Conference** drew attendees from across the world, with 290 people attending in person and 1,175 attending online.

The Sourcing Playbook is Government guidance outlining good practice in relation to sourcing goods and services. We offered training which outlined the main Government recommendations for the local government context. Sourcing Playbook training was delivered to over 100 officers with 90 per cent of these stating they were satisfied with the course.

As a direct response to the Climate Emergency – which has been announced by almost every council in England and Wales – we published a practical **Sustainable Procurement Toolkit** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/sustainable-procurement-delivering-local-economic-social-and-environmental-priorities>] for commissioners, procurement practitioners and contract managers to help them address some of the key socio-economic and environmental issues that they face, as they strive collectively towards achieving net zero. The toolkit was accessed more than 1,000 times between its launch in October 2021 and the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

We continued to build relationships with key local government suppliers in adults', children's, and construction services, enabling us to organise regular opportunities throughout the year for councils to meet with these key suppliers.

Digital connectivity and inclusion

Highlights

- We launched our **Digital Inclusion Learner Checklist** to enable councils to develop, deliver, and evaluate, their digital inclusion support for residents.
- Over **100 councils** participated in our digital programmes.

Our **Cyber, Digital and Technology** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/supporting-financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/digital>] programme supported councils – sharing tools and resources with them – to increase their service efficiencies and work towards achieving their digital transformation ambitions.

Working with **Socitm Advisory** [<https://www.advisory.socitm.net/>], we developed a **Digital Inclusion Learner Checklist** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/digital/four-essential-steps-digital-inclusion>] and a suite of accompanying resources to guide councils through the steps necessary to diagnose, develop, deliver and evaluate digital inclusion support for residents. This guidance is underpinned by a dynamic spreadsheet tool that can assess residents' need and monitor their progress towards digital maturity. The tool provides councils with a standardised baseline of quantitative data that can assist officers to demonstrate the impact of initiatives.

Our programme put council engagement, networking, and collaboration, at the centre of its activity. Across our priority areas we coordinated several stakeholder groups that helped councils come together and share best practice with one another. The Local Government Digital Committee is a group for chief executives and senior digital directors, **supporting 74 councils**. Our Digital Inclusion Network hosts digital inclusion practitioners from across the country and is made up of more than 187 council officers. Our Cyber Policy Group coordinates national cyber security developments **with 34 leading councils**. Finally, our newly launched Transformation Network, which focuses on the delivery of change programmes in councils, has grown to include 31 councils.

Behavioural Insights Programme

Highlights

- We published the tenth episode of our **Nudges for Social Good podcast** – episodes of which received more than **2,000 listens** during 2021/22.
- Our annual **Behavioural Insights Conference** was attended by **570 delegates** and shared good practice on key challenges including climate change, health inequalities, and sustainable travel.

Our **Behavioural Insights (BI) programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/behavioural-insights>] supports councils to encourage behaviour change among local communities to improve outcomes and reduce demand on public services. In 2021/22, the programme focused on using behavioural insights to confront complex issues facing local government including improving public health and responding to the pandemic.

“ The difference between 18 months ago when we applied, and now, is like night and day. Back then we didn't know what behaviour change was – now we are setting up a behaviour change unit at the council and all of our community engagement activity is run using behavioural insights (BI) tools and techniques.

– Behavioural Insights programme participant

As part of a new approach, we supported two groups of neighbouring councils to work as consortia to address local behavioural challenges. We facilitated these two groups to collaborate to deliver joint projects which could be scaled up to maximise their impact across the sector. The north-east London consortium focused on reducing local health inequalities by increasing the take-up of NHS health checks amongst those local communities who had not previously accessed them. The Yorkshire consortium worked together to increase active travel in urban and rural localities. In total, we supported 22 councils through our **Behavioural Insights programme** in 2021/22. We supported councils with specific behavioural challenges, including increasing COVID-19 vaccine uptake, increasing physical activity, reducing male suicide, and reducing school exclusions. 100 per cent of councils involved in the programme during 2021/22 said that their council gained knowledge and skills to undertake their own behaviour change interventions as a result.

We shared the learning from councils through our podcast series and our annual Behavioural Insights conference. The conference, held in February 2022, spotlighted examples of behavioural insights work delivered by councils to address the challenges of climate change, sustainable travel, and health inequalities. The conference was attended by more than 570 delegates and 92 per cent of attendees reported that the event met their requirements. We launched the tenth episode of our **Nudges for Social Good podcast** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/behavioural-insights/nudges-for-social-good>], which shares behavioural insights best practice. Episodes of the podcast received more than **2,000 listens** during 2021/22.

Case study – Making use of behavioural insights in Cheshire East

Three in four suicides in the UK are male. In 2021/22, in collaboration with **Cheshire East Council** [<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/home.aspx>] and **ICE Creates** [<https://icecreates.com/>], we finalised a behavioural insight trial designed to encourage and empower men to improve their mental health early on, before they lose the ability to cope. Our ambition was to intervene before men's mental health worsened and the risk of suicide increased. In partnership, we co-created and trialled a behaviour change intervention (as part of efforts to prevent male suicides) in line with local strategic aims outlined by the **Champs Public Health Collaborative** [<https://www.champspublichealth.com/>].

The intervention focused on prompting men to recognise how they are feeling and encouraging and empowering them to improve their wellbeing. In total, the intervention recruited 90 men to take part in a six-week wellbeing challenge. We measured their wellbeing upon starting the trial and regularly engaged with them by sharing behavioural messages and images. A control group was also organised to measure against the outcomes achieved.

The outcome of the trial was that men in the intervention group scored significantly higher on the wellbeing measure than those who were not in the intervention group. In addition, one in two men in the intervention group accessed support or information, including self-care, to better their situation – compared to one in three men from the control group who did so. Many of the men who took part shared success stories on how their lives improved following the trial, such as through improved sleeping schedules, increased physical exercise, weight loss, and taking more breaks in their daily lives.

We provided support, tools and resources to enable councils to deliver their ambitions as local leaders of their communities. This included support for local authorities to achieve climate change targets, to care for the most vulnerable residents, and to deliver services in response to local needs.

Climate Change Programme

Highlights

- Our Climate Change Programme provided support to 98.5 per cent of all councils in **England and Wales**.
- Our **Net Zero Innovation Programme** (delivered alongside University College London) supported 14 partnerships between councils, universities, and other partners to address climate issues.
- We gained international recognition as a finalist in the Climate Challenge Cup at the **COP26 UN Climate Change Conference**.

SAFER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



98%

Our **Climate Change Programme** provided support to **98.5 per cent** of all councils in England and Wales

In recent years, councils and wider society have become increasingly conscious of climate change and the severe issues it poses to all. Our **Climate Change Programme** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub>], established in February 2020, was developed to respond to the increased ambitions of councils to respond to climate issues. The programme seeks to help councils by enabling them to reach their targets of lowering local carbon emissions, and achieving adaptation, by building councils' capacity and capability in sustainability and the environment. In 2021/22, the programme had a significant impact across the sector, with 98.5 per cent of councils engaging in the **LGA Climate Change Sector Support Programme**, and 95 per cent of those surveyed stating that the programme had a positive impact on their council.

SAFER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



14

Our **Net Zero Innovation Programme** (delivered with University College London) supported **14 new partnerships** between councils, universities and others to work towards net zero

Our **Net Zero Innovation Programme (NZIP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub/net-zero-innovation-programme>] continued to bring together local authorities, universities and other stakeholders to address climate challenge at the local level and explore ways for councils to meet their net zero objectives. The programme supported partnerships to address issues including the decarbonising of transport, improving air quality and improving the wellbeing of green spaces. All participants stated that their individual NZIP project was helping their council to address its climate emergency action plan. The programme gained international recognition at the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference by reaching the final of the Climate Challenge Cup.

“ It's been a real pleasure to be a part of this and I've learned a huge amount and made some useful connections through it already. This programme was a key part in kick-starting our joint work on retrofit and decarbonisation.

– Net Zero Innovation Programme participant

To increase the capacity and capability of councils, our Climate Change Programme hosted several successful events to share excellent practice and key learning. These included dedicated carbon literacy training events both for officers (with 63 officers completing the training) and councillors (with 50 councillors completing the training) enabling them to be accredited as 'carbon literate' and able to train others to achieve the same accreditation. The programme also held a series of climate change roundtables for councils, designed to give officers who were working directly on climate and environmental issues a space to share innovative ideas and challenges and establish networks that could tackle complex issues together.

We supplemented this activity by sharing tools and guides, webinars, podcasts and e-learning modules with all councils. Our **LGA Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool** [<https://localpartnerships.org.uk/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool/>] has been accessed by 262 different councils. The tool provides a template for councils to accurately record their emissions to monitor their climate performance and allow for effective benchmarking. We published 150 case studies via our **Pass the Planet campaign** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change-hub/pass-planet>] to showcase new ideas and approaches. The Climate Change Programme has also had a crucial role in raising awareness of climate change issues and responses via our website, our **Climate Change e-bulletin** and by providing local government presence at COP26.

Case study – leading housing retrofitting with action learning sets

One of the aims of our Climate Change Programme in 2021/22 was to support councils to achieve a net zero housing stock by 2050. To do this, we wanted to promote awareness of, and provide guidance on, the retrofitting of houses and, in doing so, to create jobs and skills across communities.

Our action learning sets [<https://local.gov.uk/lga-building-housing-retrofit-skills-leadership-and-learning-programme-march-2022>] brought together councils from across the country to focus on achieving this – to look at the core problems and then identify alternative solutions. Sets were open to both councillors and officers, recognising that climate change is an issue that affects everyone and requires collaboration across the entire sector.

In total, 24 officers and councillors took part to explore, unpick and address the challenges of retrofitting domestic properties. The sets had a significant positive impact on those that took part. Significant outcomes from the programme included:

- developing a challenge map
- identifying key enablers
- establishing a community of practice for officers working in this area to share knowledge and seek support.

“ I found it very useful to have that peer-to-peer support – to find out about other sources of information that I might be able to access that I may not have come across before but that other people have because they work in different areas of councils, or different areas of the UK. This support is something that I’ve never come across before.

– Housing Retrofit Action Learning Set participant

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Highlights

- Our **Equality, diversity and inclusion hub** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-consultancy/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-hub>] received more than 7,500 page views.
- More than 25 case studies were added to the hub, providing councils with learning across topics including community cohesion, community engagement, workforce, health inequalities and other topics.

In April 2021, we launched our **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) hub** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-consultancy/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-hub>], which brings together the range of support and resources we offer in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. The hub has been impactful by sharing learning from others who are taking positive action, including through our publication of a range of case studies on approaches to community cohesion and good EDI practice. We published a webpage dedicated to case studies about health inequalities, which were exacerbated by COVID-19, and another dedicated to case studies about councils that have commissioned services to develop independence and communication skills among people with learning disabilities.

If your council is doing good work in equality, diversity and inclusion, please consider **submitting your own case study** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies>] to let us know.

Wider equality, diversity and inclusion support

Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations were factored in to all our programme areas, complemented by staff training, member advocacy and several working groups. Examples of cross-cutting support to councils in relation to EDI included our delivery of equalities peer challenges which review and provide recommendations around performance on EDI, and our redevelopment of our **equalities framework for local government** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/equality-frameworks/equality-framework-local-government>] which supports councils to meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duties).

We have also delivered EDI-focused webinars and roundtables on a range of topics including the household support fund, local welfare, health inequalities, mental health, and deprivation and poverty – and shared learning and materials from these sessions on our website.


Housing and homelessness support

Highlights

- **97 per cent** of respondents said that our **housing and homelessness support programme** had, or likely will have, a lasting impact on their council’s capacity to deliver housing and homelessness services, rough sleeping provision, and place-making.
- **100 per cent** of respondents said that the programme has had a positive impact on their council overall.

Challenges relating to housing and homelessness remain central areas of concern for local government. As democratically accountable leaders and place-shapers for the communities they serve, councils are at the forefront of responding to these issues. Our 2021/22 housing and homelessness support programme focused on providing councils with the tools and resources they needed to respond to these issues.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT



100%

100 per cent of responding councils who accessed our **housing and homelessness support** said it positively affected their council

Rough sleeping support

The local and central government response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus what can be accomplished when the two work together towards a shared goal. In 2021/22, our programme of **delivery and impact panels** to support councils in that response (established in 2020) continued to provide councils with a framework and process to consider and test their rough sleeping plans in line with the **Next Steps Accommodation programme** – in particular, to identify specific challenges, systemic drivers of homelessness, and opportunities for change. Our panels also provided opportunities to share and learn from best practice examples on topics including accessing the private rented sector, how to commission and project manage accommodation for people with complex needs, and the use of innovative temporary accommodation solutions such as micro-pods.

A further 100 councils benefited from the learning from these panels by attending our ‘Supporting rough sleepers in a time of crisis’ webinar, which highlighted lessons learned from the panels. Feedback showed that councils found our panels to be “extremely helpful”, with many councils stating that what they learned through the sharing of practical solutions was valuable.

Housing Advisers Programme

Our **Housing Advisers Programme (HAP)** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/housing-advisers-programme>] is designed to support councils seeking to:

- innovate and respond to the housing crisis
- create sustainable solutions to meeting housing needs.

In 2021/22 the programme supported more than 90 councils across England to deliver housing objectives through 30 projects, aiming to deliver affordable homes, embed sustainable technologies, deliver affordable housing, and design solutions for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

We also conducted a survey of previous HAP participants, which highlighted the significant impact of this programme. Headlines included that 97 per cent of respondents said that the programme had, or likely will have, a lasting impact on their council’s capacity to deliver housing and homelessness services, rough sleeping provision, and place-making; and 100 per cent of respondents said that the programme resulted in a positive impact overall.

A central pillar of this programme is that projects are scalable, and that learning should be shared so that the wider sector can benefit. To this end, part of the activity we undertook in 2021/22 was to expand our online **library of Housing Advisers Programme case studies** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/lga-housing-advisers-programme/housing-advisers>], including with a case study detailing the example below.

Housing Advisers Programme (HAP) case study – Working with councils to develop a net zero carbon toolkit

Cotswold District Council secured funding from our Housing Advisers Programme to collaborate with West Oxfordshire District Council and Forest of Dean District Council to fill a perceived gap in the market for advice on how to deliver net zero housing. The solution identified was to create a practical guide on this subject that could be used by all authorities to support small developers, architects, self builders and householders.

A toolkit was successfully developed, for both new-build and retrofit housing, with input from climate officers from the three councils and a consortium of leading experts from Etude, Elementa, Passivhaus Trust and Levitt Bernstein. The toolkit has since provided development planning teams in the three partner councils with a key resource to ensuring new housing and retrofits adopt and achieve the highest possible standards of energy efficiency, low carbon and net zero building design.

The toolkit was published under a Creative Commons licence, enabling all councils to adapt and share the resource, and, therefore, maximising its reach across the local government sector.

[Access the full case study \[https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/cotswold-district-council-co-production-net-zero-carbon-toolkit\]](https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/cotswold-district-council-co-production-net-zero-carbon-toolkit)

Devolution support

Devolution, the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government, ensures that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect. We created our **devolution support offer** to support councils preparing for, and taking forward, devolution deals so that they can be in the best position to deliver their devolution objectives, for example, through more targeted public services, greater growth, and stronger partnerships, in local areas.

In 2021/22, we offered bespoke support to councils undergoing devolution deals and shared important updates on news, parliamentary activity, and publications, through our **devolution hub** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/devolution-hub>] and devolution e-bulletin. This included a **publication on combined authority fiscal freedoms and financial devolution** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/combined-authorities-financial-freedoms-and-fiscal-devolution>] along with resources to help councils understand the contents of the Levelling Up White paper and what it might mean for devolution in their area.

We also continued to provide support to the Combined Authorities' Networks throughout the financial year. Feedback from members highlighted the value of the networks in terms of sharing information and good practice and 77 per cent of member respondents reported that the support provided had improved the capacity and capability of their authority to deliver their devolution deal objectives. This included communicating about devolution deals to their residents.

Accessing our support

To find out more about our refreshed **sector support offer for councils in 2022/23** [<https://local.gov.uk/publications/sector-support-offer-2022-23>], please contact the **LGA principal adviser** [<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers>] for your region.

Our principal advisers and expert regional teams are the focal point for our discussions with councils about their improvement needs and the support we have available. Each principal adviser is responsible for one or more regions. Principal advisers have extensive experience of working at senior levels in local government and the wider local public sector. Engaging with your principal adviser will enable them to coordinate our available support to maximise its positive impact on the work of your council and enable you to achieve better outcomes.