

Safer and Stronger Communities Board – Report from Cllr Nesil Caliskan (Chair)

Modern slavery

1. The [anti-slavery charity Unseen has published its Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline data for 2022](#). Figures show the number of potential victims of modern slavery in the UK more than doubled to record levels last year (6,516 victims, an increase of 116 per cent compared to 2021). There has been a particularly sharp increase in alleged exploitation in the care sector. Potential victims were identified from 99 countries, with Romania being the most common, followed by India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Albania, China and the UK.
2. We held our second Council Modern Slavery Network meeting in May. The network is an informal meeting of council officers leading on anti-slavery work to share good practice and discuss any issues. Dr Liz Such presented to the network on taking a public health approach to tackling modern slavery, and Frank Hanson from the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority provided an update on their enforcement activity. Around 65 officers attended the meeting.

Gambling

3. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport have [published the Gambling Act Review White Paper](#). We are pleased that their plans include a mandatory levy on betting firms to pay for treatment services, something that the LGA has long called for. It is also encouraging that the Government has listened to concerns from licensing authorities and the LGA and intends to introduce a formal system of cumulative impact assessments, when parliamentary time allows. Additionally, the Government will review the fees which local authorities can charge for premise licences and will consult on new powers for councils to tackle underage gambling in alcohol licensed premises. The LGA will work closely with DCMS as they work to implement the provisions outlined in the White Paper.

Martyn's Law

4. A new [Terrorism \(Protection of premises\) draft bill](#) has been published by the Home Office, which proposes introducing new requirements for those responsible for certain public premises or events to take protective security measures to mitigate against terrorist attacks. Also known as Martyn's Law, the legislation is part of the government's response to the Manchester Arena Inquiry, which recommended the introduction of legislation to improve the safety and security of public venues, and will likely have a number of implications for councils.

Licensing

5. Officers are submitting evidence to the Welsh Government's Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle White Paper. Our response highlights the importance of ensuring there is as much consistency between the English/Welsh taxi/PHV licensing regimes as possible, so that communities who live on either side of the border are still able to access good quality taxi/PHV services and businesses do not face undue challenges from the different frameworks. We have called on the Welsh Government to continue to work with the UK Government on this issue.
6. We have [produced a flyer to promote being on a licensing committee](#) to new members. The flyer highlights that licensing gives members an opportunity to link into different strategic agendas within their council, whilst also providing an opportunity to play a more active role in operational decisions that affect their local area. Officers can download the flyer and add their council's logo and use it as a tool to encourage members to consider sitting on their licensing committee.
7. We have recently published two licensing case studies. The first [case study is on Leeds councils' alcohol licensing data matrix](#). This details how Leeds' licensing and public health teams work together to support residents living in areas experiencing high levels of alcohol related harm and alcohol related anti-social behaviour through the licensing process. The second [case study highlights how Manchester Council](#) has embedded the principles of Martyn's Law into their licensing process.

Trading standards

8. We are submitting evidence to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities consultation on youth vaping. Our evidence calls for strict new measures to tackle the sale of vapes to young people, including ensuring vapes are kept behind the counter in plain packaging, and banning free vape samples from being given to children. We also highlight examples of effective enforcement work being done by trading standards teams from across the country and call on Government to boost the future pipeline of qualified trading standards officers through a dedicated apprenticeship fund, invest in regional support networks, and enable councils to recover more of the costs of running regulatory services.

Independent Review of Prevent

9. Following the publication of both the Independent Review of Prevent (which forms part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy), and the government's response to it, I have written to the Minister for Security setting out some of the issues raised with us by councils regarding the report.
10. The letter welcomes the report's acknowledgement of the importance of councils'

role in Prevent delivery and its emphasis on the wider counter-extremism landscape. It also highlights concerns about the resourcing implications for councils; of the need to ensure local flexibility is retained in order to respond appropriately to the local threat picture - avoiding approaches that could undermine community cohesion, and which ensure that those who need support or intervention continue to receive it.

Fire Services Management Committee Update

Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service

11. In March His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published findings of a spotlight report into [values and culture in fire and rescue services](#) which includes specific recommendations targeted at the LGA, the Fire Standards Board and at fire and rescue authority employers and Chief Fire Officers. The National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) have also published their [draft culture action plan](#) for feedback.
12. The LGAs is engaging with the NFCC, HMICFRS, the Home Office, and the Unions to drive work in this area and we will be holding a free, one-day conference for members looking at their governance and leadership role in culture, alongside their employer role. This is planned for the 27 June 2023.

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)

13. Cllr Greg Brackenridge and Cllr Nick Chard attended the JESIP Ministerial Oversight Board at the end of April, which was attended by ministers from the Home Office, and the Departments of Health and Social Care and Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The focus of the meeting was the second report from the Manchester Arena Inquiry and the recommendations made by the Inquiry on how to improve emergency service interoperability at incidents.

National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Strategic Masterclass Corporate Governance

14. In March Cllr Frank Biederman, FSMC Chair, presented at a NFCC Strategic Masterclass for senior Fire Officers on the theme of Corporate Governance outlining the role of FRA Members and the LGA. The event was facilitated by the NFCC Chief Operating Officer, Susannah Hancock.

Home Office – Professionalism workstream

15. In April, FSMC Lead Members attended a session facilitated by the Home Office's Policy and Innovation Lab (CoLab) to help inform the design of a potential fire professionalism body, a key part of government's reform programme as outlined in the [fire reform white paper](#).

Building Safety

16. 59 authorities were recently given a share of an £8m New Burdens grant to support their work remediating dangerous cladding. The LGA is currently working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to support these authorities to utilise this funding.
17. On 25th April, the DLUHC introduced the Building Safety (Responsible Actors Scheme and Prohibitions) Regulation 2023 to establish the Responsible Actors Scheme (RAS). Developers in scope of these regulations will be invited to join the scheme and enter a contract with the Secretary of State in which they must, at their own cost, identify, and remediate any fire safety defects in their buildings. The RAS will serve as a tool to persuade developers to conduct relevant remedial work. Not signing up to the RAS if invited to do so in effect bars companies from accessing the development market through prohibiting access to major development works or building control approvals for works already underway.
18. Central government is looking to expand Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) identification and remediation into the wider public estate, following its initial focus on local authority-maintained schools. The Office of Government Property (OGP) will be convening a working group in which there will be a designated representative from each Government department who is responsible for the identification and remediation of RAAC in buildings owned by that department. This group will also be attended by key stakeholders including the LGA.

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