

Local Government Association

Queen's Speech

On the Day Briefing

11 May 2021



Introduction

The Queen has today set out the Government's agenda for the next Parliamentary session. The Speech contained many measures that will be of relevance to councils and this paper provides details on the key proposals affecting local government and the LGA's initial response to them. Full details of today's Queen's Speech can [be found on the Government's website](#). You can also read about our work engaging with Parliament in [our LGA in Parliament 2020/21 report](#).

The LGA has circulated a [collection of media statements](#) responding to today's announcement.

Key messages

- The Government has announced a wide range of measures, including in respect of planning, jobs, health and care reform, environment, climate change and building safety. Councils are committed to working with Government and parliamentarians to help shape and deliver the proposals so that local communities are empowered to deliver meaningful and positive change.
- **Levelling up:** Councils know their local areas best and will be central to efforts to address the stark inequalities that have been exposed further by the pandemic. One of the main lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that councils can innovate well and help create and deliver new services from scratch and at speed. All councils can support the drive for economic recovery, new infrastructure investment, build more homes where needed, join up public services and provide greater access to jobs and prosperity. We will also be discussing with Government its stated ambition for English Devolution, the plans for a White Paper and how this aligns to work on the levelling-up agenda.
- **Planning:** Councils are granting permission for 9 in 10 planning applications and are not a barrier to development, yet over 1.1 million homes given planning permission in the past decade are still to be built. Councils want to work with Government to reform and strengthen our planning system, ensuring it is locally-led and delivers sustainable development so that communities can shape their local areas and ensure that the right infrastructure (such as schools and roads) is in place. To meet the Government's target of building 300,000 new homes a year, councils need to be given the powers to get building homes not seen on a scale since the 1970s. This is backed by Parliamentarians with eight in 10 MPs (80 per cent) we surveyed saying councils should have more financial freedoms and powers to build homes in their area."
- **Skills:** Many in our local communities will need to reskill for new jobs and it is good that the Queen's Speech has included plans to address this. Councils are uniquely placed to bring together partners in local places to address these challenges. With adequate resourcing and powers, councils can bring together

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diverse national schemes to ensure delivery on the ground is more effective, keeping people in work and businesses recruiting.

- **Environment:** Councils welcome the reintroduction of the Environment Bill. The Bill points to a new relationship between local and national government on the environment and while councils are best placed to take the lead on this agenda, they will need adequate funding and access to skills to deliver on our shared ambitions. It is difficult to predict the full impact of new legislation and costs associated, but we know that the pandemic has further increased the financial pressure on councils, any new duties must be fully funded in the long-term.
- **Adult social care:** Whilst we are pleased that the Government will bring forward proposals on social care reform, councils urgently need a clear timeline. Councils will also want to see concrete funding proposals that will provide sustainable support to people of all ages across the country who draw on social care to live the life they want to lead. We are keen to work with the Government and other stakeholders on a cross-party basis to achieve this. LGA commissioned polling of MPs shows that an overwhelming majority (83 per cent) are in favour of additional funding for councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding gap.
- **Health and care reform:** Councils support an equal partnership approach to improving health and wellbeing, health and care services and ensuring the best use of resources, through the Integrated Care Board and an Integrated Care System (ICS) Health and Care Partnership. There should be local flexibility, with health and local government leaders working as equal partners, to establish the Health and Care Partnership in a way that works for each area and builds on existing effective partnerships. Wherever possible, the ICS footprint should match that of councils with adult social care responsibilities. We urge government to resolve any problematic ICS footprints at the earliest opportunity through a transparent process involving all relevant councils and NHS organisations. ICSs will also need support to ensure decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, based on existing place-based partnerships, in particular Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- **Building safety:** People have a right to be safe and to feel safe in their own homes. The construction industry and those with legal duties now need to step up and deliver the remediation work required by the Building Safety Bill. It is also important that innocent people should not have to pay the costs of fixing problems to make their homes safe. Action should be taken to force the construction industry to meet the costs they have imposed on the country through decades of failure on an industrial scale and prevent wider economic damage that could result if the cladding scandal continues to impact the housing market.
- **Online safety:** Councils support the measures in the Online Safety Bill to manage online safety. We support the appointment of Ofcom as an online safety regulator and we hope the Bill will go some way to reducing online harms, including of children and vulnerable adults. Councils also support calls for the Bill to also include consideration of financial harms through scams as well as other types of harm. Long-term, sustainable funding for councils' trading

standards teams would allow them to support the Government's ambitions to tackle a greater number of cases however, online platforms must ultimately take responsibility for activity on their sites.

- **Online and hybrid meetings:** It is disappointing that the Speech did not announce a Bill to allow councils to hold online and hybrid meetings, following the High Court Judgement which confirmed that primary legislation is needed to give councils similar powers to those granted by the Coronavirus Act. The flexibility has been paramount in allowing access for both councillors and the public to council meetings. Councils want the flexibility to meet in this way and continue their business, especially in times of emergency such as when flooding occurs or if there is significant traffic disruption due to weather conditions.

Legislation:

For further information on any of these Bills, please contact the [LGA public affairs team](#).

Planning Bill

Laws to modernise the planning system will be brought forward, so that more homes can be built.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Changing local plans so that they provide more certainty over the type, scale and design of development permitted on different categories of land.
- Significantly decrease the time it takes for developments to go through the planning system.
- Replacing the existing systems for funding affordable housing and infrastructure from development with a new more predictable and more transparent levy.
- Reforming the framework for locally led development corporations to ensure local areas have access to appropriate delivery vehicles to support growth and regeneration.

LGA view

- Certainty in planning through Local Plans is critical to signal to communities and developers what development will happen in an area. This builds flexibility into the system, allowing local authorities to respond to changing circumstances.
- Local authorities will need the appropriate resources to lead on the transition and implementation to a more streamlined approach. Democratic input must be retained as part of the local decision-making process to ensure local people can have a say.

- We support a framework that will enable locally led sustainable development, driving growth and regeneration, revitalising communities and creating the right mix of homes. However, any new infrastructure levy is unlikely to be able to fund all necessary infrastructure and will require trade-off decisions to be made.
- The delivery of the right infrastructure is critical to supporting the high-quality homes and places communities need. It is vital that new occupants of homes and wider communities get the infrastructure they need, and that councils can access sufficient funding for this infrastructure in line with Local Plan ambitions.
- Councils also need powers to incentivise developers to build and ensure there is a mix of homes – to rent and buy – that are available and affordable to people that need them.
- We support measures to enhance public participation by using digital technology rather than out-of-date notices in local newspapers. A more digital service will make the planning system more accessible and efficient, alongside other forms of engagement to ensure that all residents can engage in the planning process.

Environment Bill

My Government will invest in new green industries to create jobs, while protecting the environment... Legislation will set binding environmental targets.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Placing a duty on Ministers to ensure environmental considerations are central to policy development; setting legally-binding targets; producing a long-term environmental improvement plan; and setting up the independent Office for Environmental Protection.
- Extended producer responsibility, product labelling powers, introducing a consistent approach to recycling across local authorities in England, introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, providing for more effective litter enforcement and provide the powers to introduce charges for single use plastic items.
- Improving air quality.
- Managing water sustainably.
- Protecting nature by mandating ‘biodiversity net gain’ in the planning system and through Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- Putting forward amendments to reduce the harm from storm overflows to our rivers, waterways and coastlines and new duties on the Government to publish a plan to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows.

LGA view

- We welcome the reintroduction of the Environment Bill. The legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic must be that we, as a nation, grasp the opportunity to protect and enhance our natural environment, and tackle the climate emergency.
- We welcome the Bill's intention to strengthen local powers in relation to air quality enforcement. Existing mechanisms are decades old, misaligned with one another and need to be reformed to fit with modern sources of emissions. Additional resources will need to be available for councils to deal effectively with environmental protection and to fund local solutions.
- The Bill points to a new environmental relationship between local and national government, with potentially greater responsibility sitting with councils. The impact of this is that councils will have a new environmental improvement role within their localities.
- Local government is well placed to take the lead on this agenda but to deliver on these ambitious plans they will need to have appropriately skilled staff and adequate resources.
- At this stage it is difficult to predict the impact of the legislation and the costs for local authorities in meeting their new statutory duties. We therefore recommend the Bill is amended to ensure an assessment is made of how the new duties are operating into the future and ensuring local authorities are sufficiently funded.

Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

Legislation will support a lifetime skills guarantee to enable flexible access to high quality education and training throughout people's lives.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Offer adults across the country the opportunity to retrain in later life through the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, helping them to gain in-demand skills and open up further job opportunities. (Page 50)
- Put employers at the heart of the post-16 skills system through the Skills Accelerator, by enabling employers and providers to collaborate to develop skills plans aimed at ensuring local skills provision meets local needs. (Page 50)

LGA view

- The focus on adult training, the Further Education Skills for Jobs White Paper and the introduction of Skills and Further Education Bill are important. The long-term impact of the pandemic has changed our labour market and it is already clear many adults will need to upskill and reskill for new jobs.
- Adult training must be delivered by strong local providers including colleges, independent training providers, and [council run adult education centres](#), who can work together. There should be the offer a clear pathway to further

learning and work, with support for those who need to increase their basic skills and go on to further learning and work.

- The spatial and funding scope of the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) is yet to be defined. It will be important that they are informed by the new DfE trailblazers. Employers should rightly inform local further education (FE) provision and the new LSIPs but they should also work with well-established local partnerships. Councils and Mayoral Combined Authorities provide strong local strategic and democratic oversight to the delivery of post 16 and adult skills provision. Local government involvement will be critical to the success of LSIPs.
- The Lifetime Skills Guarantee for adults to pursue their first Level 3 in-demand qualification is welcome. Courses must respond to the evolving needs of different local areas and employers and councils, combined authorities and colleges will play an important role in such planning. Allowing local flexibility would ensure the guarantee reaches those already qualified to Level 3 but who have been furloughed, need to retrain or are out of work.
- There are many adults who will not be able to access Level 3 as they lack a Level 2 qualification, leaving them vulnerable to job losses and finding it harder to secure work. The Adult Education Budget has been vital in providing support to improve skills levels but more funding for Level 2 would enable upskilling.

Health and Care Bill

My Ministers will bring forward legislation to empower the NHS to innovate and embrace technology. Patients will receive more tailored and preventative care, closer to home.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Lay the foundations for a more integrated, efficient and accountable health and care system - one which allows staff to get on with their jobs and provide the best possible treatment and care for their patients.
- Give the NHS and local authorities the tools they need to level up health and care outcomes across the country, enabling healthier, longer and more independent lives.

LGA view

- We support Integrated Care Systems (ICS) as a strong driver for integrating health services in a system through the Integrated Care Board and an ICS Health and Care Partnership. We will want to ensure that there is provision in the Bill to ensure parity of esteem between the Integrated Care Board and an ICS Health and Care Partnership.
- ICSs will need to work closely with public health in local government, education, early years services and the private and voluntary sector to ensure that the health and wellbeing of children and young people is a priority, alongside the care and support of older people and working age adults who need support. Getting support

right from pregnancy and early childhood will have lifelong impacts and needs a far higher priority because of its long-term benefits.

- Wherever possible the ICS footprint must be coterminous with the local government. We urge the Government to resolve any problematic ICS footprints at the earliest opportunity through a transparent transition process that involves all relevant councils and NHS organisations.
- ICSs will need to ensure that decisions will be taken at the most local level. ICS structures need to build on existing place-based partnerships, in particular health and wellbeing boards. ICSs should not lead to unnecessary additional layers of bureaucracy, more rules, reporting and processes.
- For our more detailed commentary on the Health and Care White Paper, please read our recently published [position paper](#).

Building Safety Bill

A Bill to establish in law a new Building Safety Regulator to ensure that the tragedies of the past are never repeated.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Create the Building Safety Regulator, with a duty on council regulators and fire and rescue authorities to cooperate with it.
- Introduce new duties for those responsible for residential buildings over 18 metres or seven storeys, including stock-holding councils.
- Establishing a new framework to provide national oversight of construction products and strengthen the powers of the Office for Product Safety and Standards in this area.
- Establishing a new homes ombudsman and simplifying the process to log complaints to the Housing Ombudsman for social housing tenants.
- Making provisions for a levy on developers.

LGA view:

- This Bill cannot come soon enough as our broken building safety system needs reforms to be enshrined in tough new legislation. Residents have a right to be safe and to feel safe in their own homes, and the construction industry and those with legal duties now need to step up and deliver the cladding remediation work required.
- The Government has yet to respond to the points raised by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee's scrutiny of the draft Bill or to provide adequate funding to protect leaseholders. No leaseholder should have to pay the costs of making their home safe. Action should be taken to force developers and product manufacturers to meet the costs they have imposed on the country through decades of failure and prevent wider economic

damage that could result if the cladding scandal continues to impact the housing market.

- Social housing providers will also need to be protected from these costs if they are to provide the housing the nation needs and improve the existing housing to the standards Government wants.
- Building safety is not only an issue for buildings over 18 metres which is why a risk-based approach, which considers the vulnerabilities of residents, is required.
- Councils and fire services will have a vital role to play in delivering the new regime. The government needs to ensure this role is fully funded.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

My Government will introduce measures to increase the safety and security of its citizens. Legislation will increase sentences for the most serious and violent offenders and ensure the timely administration of justice.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Introducing tougher sentences for offences such as rape, manslaughter and wounding with intent to cause Grievous Bodily Harm by ending the automatic release at the halfway point for serious sexual and violent offenders sentenced to a standard determinate sentence of between 4 and 7 years. This will bring their release point in line with serious violent and sexual offenders sentenced to seven years or more, following the secondary legislation we introduced in April last year.
- Increasing the maximum prison sentence for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to two years and creating a statutory requirement for the Home Secretary to report annually on progress made against the Police Covenant.
- Strengthening community sentences to cut crime by providing appropriate punishment addressing drivers of offending.
- Placing a duty on local authorities, the police, criminal justice agencies, health and fire and rescue services to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, and the introduction of Serious Violence Reduction Orders. These will be used to prevent serious violence by equipping the police with new powers to stop and search those convicted of knife and offensive weapons offences.
- Reforming pre-charge bail so that bail conditions, such as prohibiting contact, are used more effectively to better protect victims and witnesses.
- Extending the scope of offences in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 relating to the abuse of positions of trust legislation to capture additional roles, such as sport coaches and religious leaders.
- Balancing the rights of protesters with the rights of others to go about their business unhindered, by enabling the police to better manage highly disruptive

protests.

- A new criminal offence to target trespassers using vehicles to reside on land who are causing significant damage or significant disruption to local communities. Creating the necessary basis in legislation for the providers of Secure Schools to operate this new form of youth custodial institution that is designed to place education at the heart of youth custody in order to cut crime.

LGA view

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill covers a broad range of community safety issues and seeks to introduce measures which aim to have an impact on victims of crime, those who perpetrate crimes, and wider community safety.
- Councils will continue to play their important role, alongside the police and other partners, in protecting our communities and ensuring they are safe places to live.
- We would like to see further formal consultation on several measures in the Bill, particularly the Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews, imposing conditions on public protests, and the youth justice measures.
- The Bill seeks to place a new statutory duty on local authorities and wider partners to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence. We support taking a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime and emphasise the importance of investing in early intervention and prevention measures. Any new duties in the Bill must be fully funded. We are also calling on the Government to extend funding and support for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) to all areas.
- Effectively tackling unauthorised encampments will require a multi-agency response and the resources to support this. It is important the Government moves quickly to bring forward the good practice guidance it has committed to publish as this will support councils in dealing with unauthorised encampments.
- It will be important for this Bill to complement the measures outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act, the forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, the Draft Victim's Bill, as well as wider legislation and guidance, to ensure that simultaneous changes to the local government community safety landscape are considered collectively and carefully.

Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill

Proposals will be taken forward... to extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit capable broadband.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Reform the Electronic Communications Code to support faster and more collaborative negotiations for the use of private and public land for telecommunications deployment

LGA view

- Access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is a necessity for all communities, something they have rightfully come to expect and essential to keeping pace with developments across the globe.
- Positive progress has been made in extending connectivity across local areas, yet some communities, many in rural areas, are unable to maintain a consistent mobile signal throughout the day.
- Councils recognise the important role they must play to ensure local policies are streamlined and conducive to the commercial roll out of mobile infrastructure.
- At the same time, any move to weaken planning control and increase permitted development rights takes away the ability of residents, businesses and councillors to contribute in a meaningful way to the deployment of new or upgraded masts, sites and infrastructure.
- We look forward to working with the Government and Industry to ensure genuine collaboration that respects the needs of local communities and meets the growing demand for high quality digital connectivity.

Subsidy Control Bill

Government will take forward a Subsidy Control Bill that will implement a domestic UK subsidy control regime that reflects our strategic interests and national circumstances.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Creating a consistent set of UK-wide principles that public authorities must follow when granting subsidies.
- Exempting categories of subsidies from certain obligations of the regime or leaving out of scope entirely.
- Prohibiting and placing conditions on certain types of subsidies which are at a particularly high risk of distorting markets.
- Obligating public authorities to upload information on subsidies to a new UK-wide, publicly accessible transparency database.
- Establishing an independent subsidy control body to oversee the UK's bespoke, modern subsidy control system.
- Providing for judicial oversight and enforcement of the granting of subsidies.

LGA view

- The UK's new subsidy control regime must give a green light to the ambitions of local areas. Addressing the needs of local areas through specific financial

support to businesses and local organisations must become a stated objective for the regime. This will ensure changes in the law deliver real benefits on the ground. The regime must be based on local government's experience of what is needed and what works.

- Simplification and local flexibility should be the foundation of the regime as this will help ensure a wide range of local ambitions can be delivered, including:
 - COVID recovery: supporting businesses and individuals,
 - local economic growth and job creation to deliver 'levelling up',
 - environmental, climate, and energy improvements,
 - waste, housing, and transport improvements,
 - high speed digital infrastructure for all,
 - improved social and public health services,
 - safer and stronger communities,
 - promoting employment and skills,
 - promoting the arts, culture, heritage, and sports.
- Grant and loan schemes to deliver these ambitions must continue to be allowed when in line with certain principles. Arrangements must be set out in legislation for legal certainty, be at least as flexible as the previous regime, and designed in conjunction with local government.
- The system must be simplified for those awarding aid, easier to understand, and new reporting requirements must be light touch. A new approach to low-value support of a 'purely local nature' is also needed to ensure local initiatives can go ahead which benefit communities.

Procurement Bill

Laws will simplify procurement in the public sector.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Enshrining in law the principles of public procurement such as: value for money, public benefit, transparency, integrity, fair treatment of suppliers and non-discrimination.
- Overhauling the complex and inflexible procurement procedures and replacing them with three simple, modern procedures. This will allow the public sector more scope to negotiate with potential suppliers to deliver innovative new solutions.
- Requiring buyers to have regard to the Government's strategic priorities for public procurement as set out in a new National Procurement Policy Statement.
- Introducing procurement processes that allow contracting authorities to buy at pace, for serious situations that are declared a crisis, with strengthened safeguards for transparency.
- Establishing a single data platform for supplier registration that ensures suppliers only have to submit their data once to qualify for any public sector procurement.

- Tackling unacceptable behaviour such as supplier fraud through new exclusion rules and giving buyers the tools to properly take account of a bidder's past performance.
- Reforming the process for challenging procurement decisions to speed up the review system and make it more accessible and capping the level of damages available to bidders in order to reduce the attractiveness of speculative claims.

LGA view

- The LGA welcomes the ambition to transform public procurement as set out in the Transforming Public Procurement Green paper (2020) including the move to simplify and reduce the number of procurement procedures from seven to three. We support the removal of the Light Touch Regime (LTR) from procurement legislation and the proposal to supersede it with the new flexible procedure although there are some concerns around how the procedure might work in practice.
- The LGA has been working with Government on the new regime to ensure councils' needs are considered in relation to the proposed national procurement policy statement. New priorities set out in relation to social value, pipelines and benchmarking capabilities are all things we have been promoting in the LGA's National Procurement Strategy since 2018.
- There are concerns that the proposed single supplier registration system will add complexity. The LGA and councils look forward to working with the Government to ensure the new system is a success.
- The area of tackling unacceptable behaviour and supplier fraud needs to be strengthened and fairly applied. There are additional behaviours to be included under grounds for exclusion beyond what is proposed, such as tax evasion, data protection, equalities, modern slavery, and professional misconduct.
- The proposal to cap the level of damages awarded to aggrieved suppliers is welcome. It will reduce large and speculative damages claims and delivers on the objective of making proper use of public funds and be more proportionate.
- We are concerned that the changes to the current procurement rules for the NHS might lead to an uneven playing field between local government and the NHS. Any measures to reduce procurement requirements on the NHS must not, inadvertently, create barriers to joint commissioning or local authority-led commissioning.

Armed Forces Bill

Honour and strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant, placing it in law.

The main elements of the Bill are to:

- Renew the Armed Forces Act 2006, which would otherwise expire at the end of 2021 and there would be no legislative basis for our Armed Forces.
- Introduce a new duty to require relevant public bodies across the UK, when exercising specified public functions in the education, healthcare and housing sectors to have due regard to the three principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:
 - Recognising the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces.
 - That it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.
 - That special provision for Service people may be justified by the effect on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.

LGA view

- Armed Forces serving personnel, veterans, reservists and their families are valued members of our communities. All councils have signed the voluntary Armed Forces Covenant and are fully committed to honouring their obligations to those who have served their country.
- We fully support the aim of the Bill to help ensure armed forces personnel, veterans and their families are not disadvantaged by their service when accessing key public services. We will continue to work positively with government to further embed the Covenant locally, building upon what has already been achieved.
- We are concerned that clause 8 of the Bill, which sets out the proposed statutory duty for all UK public authorities to have due regard to the principles of the Covenant, lacks detail. This means it is difficult to fully understand the implications for councils across housing, education and healthcare services. It is important that potential new burdens are fully funded by national government and kept under review so that councils can continue to deliver high quality services to their armed forces community. We look forward to seeing guidance which will set out what is expected of councils in greater detail.

Animal Welfare Plan and Legislation

Legislation will also be brought forward to ensure the United Kingdom has, and promotes, the highest standards of animal welfare.

The main elements of the plan and legislation are:

- Deliver on the Government's commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare by creating an Action Plan for Animal Welfare and legislation.
- Recognise animal sentience in law through the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill.
- Increase protections for pets, sporting animals, and farm animals by ending the export of live animals for slaughter, banning the keeping of primates as pets,

improving standards in zoos and cracking down on puppy smuggling, and enhancing conservation through a Kept Animals Bill.

- Ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals abroad and end the advertising for sale of low welfare experiences abroad through an Animals Abroad Bill, as well as considering steps to limit the trade and sale of foie gras.
- Introduce mandatory cat microchipping and review current microchip databases.

LGA view

- We support the objective of increasing animal welfare standards and eradicating cruel practices both domestically and internationally. However, the Government should balance the need to educate consumers alongside the need for enforcement, particularly in terms of poor welfare overseas, and it must ensure councils can practicably take action in response to new regulations.
- The elements outlined in the announcement are likely to mean a significant amount of additional work for councils' regulatory services which are already under significant pressure. New responsibilities will need adequate resourcing in order to deliver the Government's ambitions.
- The cross-government regulatory services task and finish group is already considering the challenges facing local regulatory services. These new responsibilities around animal welfare demonstrate the importance of the group's work to secure sustainable funding for regulatory services and a long term cross-government view of the demands being placed on them.

Dormant Assets Bill

Legislation will support the voluntary sector by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and releasing additional funds for good causes.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Expanding the Scheme into new asset classes and improving consumer protection in reuniting people with forgotten money.
- Aligning the model for how dormant assets funding is allocated in England with that used in the devolved administrations. This will enable Ministers to set, through secondary legislation, more specific purposes for the allocation of funding within the general "social or environmental purpose".
- Improving the Scheme's operation, for example by allowing the Scheme's administrator, Reclaim Fund Ltd, to only accept transfers from participants who have undertaken appropriate efforts to trace, verify and reunite the asset with its rightful owner.
- Naming Reclaim Fund Ltd as the Scheme's authorised reclaim fund.

LGA view

- Voluntary and community sector organisations are vital partners for councils across a wide range of issues. COVID-19 has led to a significant increase in demand for support from the voluntary and community sector and had an impact on major income streams from retail units and fund-raising activities.
- We look forward to understanding more about how the Bill will support the voluntary sector to tackle social and environmental challenges facing local areas, and what over support Government will offer to ensure the sustainability of the voluntary and community sector.

Professional Qualifications Bill

Create a new framework to recognise professional qualifications from across the world to ensure the UK can access professionals in areas of a workforce shortage. This will replace the interim system that gives preference to professional qualifications from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Enable the Government to provide UK regulators with a consistent set of powers to enter into agreements with regulators overseas to recognise professional qualifications.

LGA view

- The initial impact of the proposals for local government will be around social workers because that is the only regulated profession on the current shortage occupation list for which councils are the main employer and may wish to recruit more widely overseas. The LGA will seek clarification on the impact for other professions where the sector experiences recruitment difficulties. The emphasis will be on professional regulatory bodies making reciprocal arrangements with their overseas equivalents.
- It will also be important to ensure any process for recognising qualifications from EU and non-EU citizens is easy to understand for all employers, including councils.

Draft Online Safety Bill

Introduce ground-breaking laws to keep people safe online whilst ensuring that users' rights, including freedom of expression, are protected online.

The main elements of the Bill are to:

- Place a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online. This will require them to tackle illegal content on their services and to protect children from harmful content and activity online. They must seriously consider the risks their services pose to users and take action to protect them.

- Require major platforms to set out clearly in their terms and conditions what legal content is unacceptable on their platform and enforce these consistently and transparently.
- Requiring platforms to have effective and accessible user reporting and redress mechanisms to report concerns about harmful content, and challenge infringement of rights (such as wrongful takedown).
- Designating Ofcom as the independent online safety regulator and giving it a suite of robust enforcement powers to uphold the regulation. This will include very large fines of up to £18 million or 10 per cent of annual global turnover - whichever is greater - as well as business disruption measures. The Government expects Ofcom to prioritise enforcement action where children's safety has been compromised.
- Boosting public resilience to disinformation through media literacy and supporting research on misinformation and disinformation.

LGA view

- Abuse online or offline should not be tolerated. We look forward to working with government to build a thriving digital economy that is trusted by and protects everyone in the UK while ensuring users' rights, including freedom of expression.
- Appointing Ofcom as an online safety regulator is a step in the right direction. We hope it will go some way to reducing online harms, including of children and vulnerable adults.
- We are concerned about the increasing spread of mis- and disinformation, and incidents of intimidation and abuse of elected representatives. Both pose significant threats to local democracy, as well as public health and community safety, and we welcome measures to tackle these issues.
- We are pleased that the Bill requires platforms to take responsibility for what is on their website and those who use it. In addition, we support calls for the Bill to include consideration of financial harms through scams, as well as other types of harm.
- Councils' trading standards teams play a vital role in tackling fraud, including online, and additional funding would allow councils to support the Government's ambitions to tackle a greater number of online scam cases. In addition, it is vital that online platforms take responsibility for fraudulent activity taking place on their sites.

Draft Victims Bill

Proposals will be brought forward to...support victims.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Enshrining the 12 key rights in the new Victims' Code into law. Those key rights include being:
 - Kept informed at key stages of the case.
 - Provided with regular updates on the progress of their case.
 - Referred to organisations supporting victims of crime.
 - Given the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement and be informed how it was used in court.
 - Informed when an offender is released, where eligible under the Victim Contact Scheme.

LGA view

- We welcome the Government's commitment to enshrine victims' rights into law, as this will help to ensure victims are more consistently supported and thereby enable them to deal with and recover from the impacts of crime. The proposals should also improve victims' experiences within the criminal justice process.
- It will be important for the Bill to recognise that 'victims of crime' will apply to a broad range of crimes – including those where the victim is also a perpetrator, such as in cases of child criminal exploitation – and there will be different prosecuting authorities involved in these cases. Listening to and engaging with victims of crime, and understanding more about their lived experience, will be vital in helping to achieve meaningful change and reform. We are also keen to work with the Government to ensure child victims of crime receive suitable support.
- The LGA has long called for greater investment in domestic abuse community-based support services, as well as early intervention and prevention services, and perpetrator programmes. It is therefore positive to see the Government has committed to consult on the provision of community-based domestic abuse services and will set expectations for the standard and availability of victim support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Current funding for victim support services is short-term and piecemeal. This does not allow for long-term strategic planning, nor provide any consistency for much-needed specialist support services and the victims that need to access these services. There needs to be greater collaboration across Government departments on this important issue, as well as comprehensive, multi-year funding provided to commissioners.
- To accompany this Bill, we would also like to see a greater focus on tackling perpetrators of crime, and a clear ministerial lead focusing on this important issue. There needs to be an integrated approach to identifying and responding to perpetrators, to help change their behaviour and address the risks posed by them.
- This new Victims' Bill should align and complement the provisions outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act, the Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Strategy, and the forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, as well as wider guidance and legislation.

White Papers, Green Papers and policy measures

Levelling Up White Paper

My Government's priority is to deliver a national recovery from the pandemic that makes the United Kingdom stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before. To achieve this, my Government will level up opportunities across all parts of the United Kingdom, supporting jobs, businesses and economic growth and addressing the impact of the pandemic on public services.

The main elements of the proposals around levelling up are:

- The Government will bring forward a Levelling Up White Paper later this year, building on actions the Government is already taking to level up across the UK.
- This will set out bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunities in all parts of the UK. It looks to improve living standards, grow the private sector, improve health, education and policing, strengthen communities and local leadership and restoring pride in place.
- It defines levelling up in terms of creating good jobs, skills and productivity in places that have seen economic decline and enabling more people to grasp the opportunities of Brexit and get on in life without feeling they have to leave their local area.

LGA view

- The LGA and councils look forward to working closely with the Government to help deliver on its commitment to level up and invest in local areas across all parts of the country.
- Bringing greater resources and powers closer to communities is the best way to ensure a recovery that works for everyone. A unity of effort will be needed between local businesses, public services and communities to address the full range of opportunities and challenges across the country.
- Councils are crucial partners to achieving a recovery that works for all. With the right funding, freedoms and devolved powers, councils can work with partners to drive improvements in public health, boost local economic growth, revive town and city centres, build more homes, improve our roads and equip people with the skills they need to succeed so no one is left behind.
- We will be discussing with Government its stated ambition for English Devolution, the plans for a White Paper and how this aligns to work on the levelling-up agenda.

Adult social care reform

Proposals on social care reform will be brought forward.

Key issues the Government will address

- Do more to ensure that everyone receives high-quality, joined-up care.

- Through the Health and Social Care Bill, improve the oversight of how social care is commissioned and delivered, and facilitate greater integration between health and care services by placing Integrated Care Systems on a statutory footing across the UK and putting more power and autonomy in the hands of local systems.
- Support the development of the adult social care workforce and engage with staff about how best to support them
- Work with local and national partners to ensure the Government's approach to reform is informed by diverse perspectives, including those with lived experience of the care sector.

LGA view

- We are pleased that proposals on social care reform will be brought forward, but urgently need a clear timeline. It is vital that this is also urgently converted into concrete funding proposals to provide sustainable support to people of all ages across the country who draw on social care to live the life they want to lead. We are keen to work with the Government and other stakeholders on a cross-party basis to achieve this. Councils and their communities need to see action as soon as possible.
- In our recent [letter](#) to Government on adult social care reform, we called for sustainable funding, defined in three broad ways. First, investment on an ongoing basis to fully move from a historical model of wellbeing based on care homes and hospitalisation to one of prevention, reablement, more appropriate accommodation, and community care and support that puts people first and acts on their knowledge of lived experience. This is what will deliver the necessary transition to a broader model of care that achieves better outcomes for people and, in turn, strengthens our local communities
- We must end the approach of additional one-off grants and, in particular, the adult social care precept to fund social care. While welcome, these measures are only ever sticking plaster solutions that are unsustainable and harm longer-term planning. Care and support to help people live their best life is a national entitlement and dependence on council tax to fund it is not the solution.
- As important as it is to protect people from having to sell their home to pay for care, this will carry a significant cost. Alongside any reforms of this type, we need a solution for bringing more money into social care that matches the level of ambition we have for social care as a key way in which people are supported to lead their best and most fulfilling lives. We have previously stated, and still believe, that the case should be made for increases in national taxation and/or a social care premium based on the core principle of universal risk-pooling. It is therefore helpful that the Queen's Speech recognises that the risk of people's future care costs is not shared equally across society. It is also helpful that the document recognises the vital role played by our care workforce and the need to support them. The LGA looks forward to extensive engagement across the whole sector, including employers and commissioners, about all aspects of workforce development including reward and career structures as well as skills and wellbeing.

- Our view on the social care elements of the Health and Social Care White Paper are set out in detail in our recently published [position paper](#).

Skills: COVID-19 Recovery and the Skills for Jobs White Paper

Incentivising new apprenticeship hires.

LGA view

- Extending the duration and the value of the apprenticeship incentives to September 2021 will make apprenticeships more attractive to many employers. The Government has listened to employers including local government and we are suggesting the Government should extend incentives to at least March 2022 so that employers can take full advantage once current restrictions are lifted.

Climate Change, Net Zero and COP26

My Government will invest in new green industries to create jobs, while protecting the environment. The United Kingdom is committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and will continue to lead the way internationally by hosting the COP26 Summit in Glasgow.

The main elements are:

- Legislation to set Carbon Budget six at the level recommended by the Climate Change Committee.
- A Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution which will mobilise £12 billion of investment and create thousands of highly-skilled green jobs.
- The Energy White Paper which sets out the transformation of the UK's energy system.
- The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy which sets out an ambitious blueprint to deliver the world's first low-carbon industrial sector.
- Forthcoming sector strategies, including Heat and Buildings, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and the comprehensive Net Zero Strategy.
- The UK hosting the COP26 negotiations in November.

LGA view

- The LGA supports the UK's commitment to achieving net zero by 2050. We declared a climate emergency alongside at least 230 councils, where nearly two thirds of councils in England aim to be carbon neutral earlier than the national target.

- Net-zero can only be achieved with decarbonisation happening in every place across the country – that’s every household, community and local economy. This will require local leadership. Councils share the ambition for a green revolution and want to work with government and businesses to establish a national fiscal and policy framework for addressing the climate emergency, supported with long term funding.
- Councils can play a significant role in delivering a green recovery, which includes supporting national government to create green jobs. Councils can use their role as local leaders to bring together the skills and low carbon agendas to unlock growth in their areas. Renewable energy infrastructure can also provide significant opportunities in the green growth sector and job creation.
- COP26 provides an opportunity to highlight councils as essential local partners in translating international and national ambitions into transformative local action. Councils are already leading the way and the Glasgow Summit offers an opportunity to promote British councils’ work and innovation.
- The LGA welcomes the previous announcement to cut carbon emissions by 78 per cent by 2035, compared to 1990 emissions levels which was recommended by the Government’s independent advisors, the Climate Change Committee. We await more detail on how a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will be delivered and the role of councils through the forthcoming sector strategies and comprehensive Net Zero Strategy.

Bus Reform

Proposals will be taken forward to transform connectivity by rail and bus.

The main elements of the Reform are:

- Our National Bus Strategy for England, we will deliver better bus services for passengers across England outside London, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered.
- The National Bus Strategy outlined how we will spend the £3 billion announced by the Prime Minister to transform buses outside London. In order to access that transformational funding, local authorities and operators will be required to work together to improve services.
- These reforms will be one of our major acts of levelling up by ensuring there are more frequent, cheaper and more reliable bus services across the country which are easier to understand and use with integrated services and ticketing.
- £120 million will be spent in the 2021-22 Financial Year on supporting the Government’s commitment to introduce 4,000 zero-emission buses, building on the recent award of £50 million to Coventry from the All-Electric Bus Towns and Cities competition.

LGA View

- We are pleased the Government is investing in improving local bus services, and it is good the National Bus Strategy recognises the important role of

councils.

- Councils want to work with government to make sure every community is able to access a local bus service. We would urge government to also plug the £700 million annual funding gap councils faced before the pandemic in providing the concessionary fares scheme, which would help to protect local routes and reverse the decline in bus services.

Beating COVID and backing the NHS

My Government will protect the health of the nation, continuing the vaccination programme.

LGA View

- Local government has successfully supported the national effort to tackle the COVID-19 emergency. The LGA notes that the Government has significantly increased the financial commitment to the NHS to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Local government services have been vital in supporting and protecting people during the pandemic including assisting in the delivery of the vaccination programme, establishing local contact tracing partnerships and conducting surge testing, supporting care providers to prevent COVID infections in care settings, helping the clinically extremely vulnerable needing to shield and those having to self-isolate, as well as ensuring compliance with social distancing requirements.
- Councils have worked with social care providers to increase their fee levels and ensure providers have had support with the additional costs posed by Covid-19, such as higher staff sickness and absence rates and higher administration and PPE costs. Councils have also supported providers with cash flow, such as by paying on plan in advance. All of these efforts have been part of councils' wider efforts to best support people who draw on care and support. We are disappointed therefore that there is no equivalent recognition of the need for additional resources for adult social care and public health.

Prevention

Measures will be brought forward to support the health and wellbeing of the nation, including to tackle obesity.

LGA view

- Everyone agrees that prevention is better than cure. Additional measures to help make our residents happier and healthier would be welcome and councils look forward to working with the government to bring forward efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of the nation in our recovery from Covid-19.

- Local government is at the heart of local work to improve the public's health. It provides the leadership, expertise, partnership-working and access to local resources that are fundamental to strong place-based coordination.
- Health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities have been exposed and deepened over the past 12 months, while we have yet to see the long-term physical and mental impact of the pandemic and what it means for our future health and wellbeing. Councils should be at the centre of efforts to reduce inequalities and improve people's lives. This includes making greater use of combined resources at local, system and national level. Encouraging behaviour change, such as through healthy weight programmes, stop smoking campaigns, tackling vaccine hesitancy and promoting positive mental health, will also see people across the country have longer, healthier and happier lives.
- Every pound invested by government in council-run services such as public health helps to relieve pressure on other services like the NHS and the criminal justice system, while also proving to be [three to four times more cost-effective in improving people's health](#) than money spent in the NHS. Councils have seen a £700 million real terms reduction in public health funding between 2014/15 and 2020/21 – a fall of almost a quarter (23.5 per cent) per person. If the Government's prevention agenda is to succeed then this must be re-evaluated in future spending rounds.
- We support proposals to strengthen front-of-pack nutrition labelling and calorie labelling on alcohol. We believe a single system will help people make informed choices. We also welcome plans to ban adverts of products high in fat, sugar or salt from TV before 9pm. It is disappointing that the white paper did not give councils powers to ban junk food advertising near schools.

Mental Health Act Reform

Measures will be brought forward to support the health and wellbeing of the nation, including to...improve mental health.

The main elements of reform are to:

- Bring the Mental Health Act into the 21st century and give people greater control over their treatment and receive the dignity and respect they deserve.
- Reform the process for detention, improve care and treatment whilst someone is detained, and give them better support to challenge detention if they wish, shifting the balance to give the patient more say.
- Change the law around how people with a learning disability or autistic people are treated under the Act to prevent prolonged detentions.
- Address the disproportionate number of people from black and minority ethnic groups detained under the Act.
- The Government remains committed to its ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan to expand and transform mental health services in England.

- The Government has also set out its Mental Health Recovery Action Plan as part of the commitment to build back better.

LGA view

- The LGA supports reforming the Mental Health Act. We welcome the ambition to achieve meaningful change for people living with severe mental illness, including addressing the disproportionate number of people from black and minority ethnic groups detained under the Act, changing the law around how learning disabled and autistic people are treated, and a stronger focus on upholding people's human rights.
- The Act will have significant resource implications for councils' already stretched statutory children's and adults' mental health services, which central government will need to fully fund in line with recent investment in NHS mental health services.
- Achieving a reduction in detentions is not solely about legislative change. There needs to be a fully funded system-wide shift in policy and resources away from medicalisation and treating mental ill health, to early intervention, prevention, and support for pandemic recovery through integrated community-based mental health services that are jointly commissioned by councils and the NHS.
- It is positive that the Mental Health Recovery Action Plan makes available additional one-off funding to help national and local services from all sectors to meet new demand for mental health and wellbeing support arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Going forward, local statutory children's and adult's mental health services, and wider public mental health services, need long-term parity of funding with NHS mental health services, to support mental health recovery and help the whole population to be mentally well.

Education recovery plan

As we build back from the pandemic, we are putting in place a package of measures to ensure no child is left behind as a result of the education and extracurricular activities they may have missed out on. We are working with the Education Recovery Commissioner – Sir Kevan Collins – to develop an ambitious, long-term plan that builds back a better and fairer education system in England and delivers significant reforms to address the scale of this challenge.

As a first step, over the past year we have already provided over £2 billion to schools, colleges and early years settings to support pupils' academic and wider progress. This includes £1.7 billion in funding to support education recovery and over £400 million is being invested to support access to remote education including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets.

LGA view

- Education recovery is a long-term endeavour and must go beyond academic achievement to include measures to support children and young people's socialisation, communication and mental health and well-being. While recovery support should be made available to all children and young people, it is vital

that vulnerable children, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, are the focus of this programme of work.

- Councils are ideally placed, in their role as leaders/convenors of local education systems (a role that has been emphasised during the pandemic) to bring together early years providers, schools, academies, Multi Academy Trusts and the further education sector, to join up local efforts to promote education and wellbeing recovery for children and young people, working towards a number of education recovery objectives that have been set nationally.
- Additional funding to support education will be essential and to maximise the effective use of this funding locally, councils should have flexibility to pool the various funding streams to best meet the need of children and young people.

Wider Education Reform

We are investing an additional £730 million into high needs in 2021/22, building on the additional £780 million in 2020/21.

We have launched an independent review of children's social care, looking at the needs, experiences, and outcomes of the children it supports. We are also continuing our work on the Review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which aims to ensure the SEND system is consistent, high quality, and integrated across education, health and care.

LGA view

- We welcome the Government's review into support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is imperative that the findings of the review are published as a matter of urgency and that they address the rising demand and cost pressures facing councils and their partners in delivering SEND support. We are supportive of a reformed, sustainable system which puts families at its heart and gives children and young people with SEND support at the earliest opportunity, so they can live healthy and fulfilled lives. Reform of the system will also help to clearly align responsibilities and powers amongst councils and their partners to ensure there is effectively delivery.
- Councils continue to face major financial challenges in supporting children with SEND and we are pleased that the Department for Education (DfE) has recognised this, with £1.5 billion in additional high needs funding allocated to councils for 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- Irrespective of the shape of a reformed SEND system, we are clear that significant legacy costs are already 'baked in' to the existing system, largely due to the extension of duties to support children and young people and the expectation of an education placement to the age of 25. We are keen to work with the DfE to model the long-term financial impacts of the 2014 Children and Families Act to aid understanding of how we collectively deal with legacy issues, which will require different arrangements of support than those that may be in place as a result of the SEND Review.
- Every child deserves a safe and happy childhood in which they are loved and supported to reach their full potential. Some children will need help from children's social care services for that to happen, and this review gives the

entire system the opportunity to make sure services work as well as they should.

- The review will need to look at the experiences of children in the round, considering not only the work of children's social care departments, but partners including schools and healthcare services who have a vital role to play in supporting children and their families. Demand for support has increased dramatically over the last decade, and it is important that we understand why this is and whether services are adequately resourced to give children the right help at the right time.
- We have consistently called for additional funding to meet increased demand across the entirety of children's services.

Criminal Justice Catch-up and Recovery Plan

Legislation will...ensure the timely administration of justice.

The main elements of the Plan are:

- To put the running of the coronial system on the same footing as other courts and tribunals, with efficiency increased through virtual hearings, the holding of inquests without a hearing in non-contentious cases, discontinuing investigations where the cause of death is natural without first requiring a post mortem, and allowing coroner areas to merge across local authority boundaries.
- By ensuring the coroners' jurisdiction is in line with other courts and tribunals, delays in progressing cases will be reduced and will therefore reduce the distress of bereaved families.

LGA view

- Councils are keen to ensure that coronial inquests minimise the distress to bereaved families, and welcome measures that allow coroners' courts to operate more effectively by working in the same way as other courts and tribunals.
- The ability to rationalise coroner areas will assist councils in making coroners' services operate more efficiently. Government should fully fund the costs associated with these proposals as councils may need to invest in new technology and systems to deliver these new ways of working.
- As part of the plan, the Government should also review whether coroners' courts should continue to be a locally managed service, or whether it would be better for the coronial service to be run, managed and funded by central government.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy

Proposals will be brought forward to address violence, including against women and girls.

The main elements of the Strategy are to:

- Tackle crime and this includes tackling violence against women and girls.
- Take action to toughen sentences, protect the public and improve support for victims and investing in support for victims.
- Publish a new VAWG Strategy and increase the ability to tackle emerging crime types such as ‘upskirting’ and revenge porn.
- Conduct an end-to-end review of the criminal justice response to rape, due this summer, looking at how every stage of the criminal justice system handles rape cases, from police report to the final outcome at court.
- Also to publish a Domestic Abuse Strategy focusing on prevention, accompanied by £25 million of investment which will more than double the amount being spent on programmes to work with perpetrators.

LGA view

- Councils are determined to help tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), working alongside the police and criminal justice services, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), health and education services, the voluntary and community sector and wider support services, to help ensure women and girls are protected from all forms of abuse.
- It is right the Government’s VAWG strategy (2021 – 2024) should focus on all forms of violence against women and girls, including rape and sexual violence, domestic abuse, forced marriage, so called ‘honour-based’ abuse, female genital mutilation (and other culturally specific forms of abuse), stalking, sharing of personal intimate images without consent and online harassment, which have devastating consequences.
- We welcome the new strategy’s ambition to drive forward improvements in the effort to target perpetrators; to respond to the changing nature of these crimes; and, to place victims and survivors at the heart of the approach. It is particularly important that the Government’s strategy captures the lived experience of those affected by VAWG, to help improve the response to these crimes. We also welcome the Government’s commitment to carrying out an end-to-end Rape Review.
- Increased investment in the Safer Streets Fund is positive, but it will not, on its own, address systemic VAWG issues. There needs to be a comprehensive and long-term approach focused on achieving culture change and preventing VAWG issues arising in the first place, spanning across education, health, housing, families, and communities through to policing and criminal justice measures.
- This approach must be accompanied by comprehensive, multi-year funding made available to local commissioners to allow for long-term strategic planning and delivery of VAWG services. This should include Government funding the National Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Centre. There also needs to be greater co-ordination across Government departments, to make this a cross-

departmental work-stream that focuses on both support for victims and tackling and preventing perpetrators' violent or abusive behaviour.

New Plan for Immigration Legislation

This supports the delivery of the [New Plan for Immigration](#) with a range of measures that include a new system of asylum support and accommodation.

The main elements are to:

- Move towards a reception centre model while claims for asylum are processed, with routes to the UK having an impact on both the decision making process and eventual status of those claiming asylum, including changes in access to councils' support at the end of the process
- Clarify government's role in both tackling trafficking networks and supporting victims of modern slavery.

LGA view

- Councils are keen to build on their strong track record of supporting those resettling in new communities.
- Future developments for asylum support and accommodation should include joint priorities agreed between local and central government. It needs to shift to a more place-based, equitable and sustainably funded system that provides effective support for asylum seeking children, adults and families.
- Local experiences and learning should inform the development of a reception centre model, particularly to ensure early engagement of councils and local partners.
- Local government is keen work through changes to councils' responsibilities for supporting those at the end of the process to ensure a full understanding of the potential impacts for councils, communities and on a wide range of adults and families.
- Modern slavery is a heinous crime and councils want to play their part in both working to eradicate it and supporting victims to recover but need the resources to enable them to do so.

Early Years Healthy Development Review

Measures will be brought forward to ensure that children have the best start in life, prioritising their early years.

Measures will include:

- Encouraging all local authorities to publish a clear Start for Life offer for parents and carers, showing families what support they can expect to receive during the 1,001 critical days from conception to age two.

- Building on the Government's commitment to champion 'Family Hubs', encouraging local authorities to make them a place for families to access Start for Life services.
- Working across the system to hold local services to account, including through proportionate inspections, and to improve data, evaluation and outcomes of health services.
- Encouraging local areas to nominate a leader and ensuring the delivery of the Review is overseen at a national level.

LGA view

- It is positive that the Early Years Healthy Development Review conducted by Andrea Leadsom MP recognises the crucial support provided by councils to improve outcomes for children aged zero to two.
- We will work with the Review team to ensure the 'Start for Life' and Family Hubs vision builds on the positive programmes already in place locally.
- For the vision to be realised it will need to be properly resourced. To develop 'excellence' in the early years, the Government will need to reverse the reductions to the public health and early intervention grants and ensure local authorities have the resources they need to commission effective preventative services.
- Local authorities are already accountable for improving outcomes in the early years sector and have established leadership. The Review should remain flexible and support local arrangements.
- The creation of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) provides an excellent opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of children and to tackle health inequalities. To do this effectively local government leaders need to be at the heart of ICS leadership to ensure a joined-up approach across the wider system.

Enterprise and jobs

As part of our drive to net zero, creating 250,000 highly skilled green jobs across the UK.... Supporting and creating jobs across the UK through our Plan for Jobs, which will particularly help areas at risk of unemployment.

LGA view

- [LGA analysis projects that the low carbon sector could require and create 700,000 jobs across England by 2030](#) and almost 1.2 million jobs by 2050. These jobs will respond to regional and local economic specialities.
- One of the main lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that councils can innovate well and help deliver and at speed. The Plan for Jobs will require all private, public and voluntary partners to work together at a local level. Councils have proved that they have the legitimacy to provide the local leadership needed to

bring together partners to ensure delivery is effective and at speed.

UK Community Renewal Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The £220 million UK-wide Community Renewal Fund will provide funding for local areas across the UK in 2021-22 to help them prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, in addition to the continued high level of funding from EU structural funds.

LGA view

- The LGA recognises that the UK Community Renewal Fund is an important way to help councils invest in their areas. It is good that councils have been placed at the heart of the delivery.
- We are looking forward to working with the Government to help design the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in advance of its introduction in 2022/23 through a Task Force. We look forward to further announcements on the UKSPF, including confirmation of the total quantum of the funding (based on commitment from ministers).

Regulatory reform

The Prime Minister has established a Better Regulation Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Chancellor, to ensure the Government is driving an ambitious programme of regulatory reform that enables and supports growth and innovation.

LGA view

- COVID-19 has highlighted the important and versatile role of councils' frontline regulatory services teams in protecting the public and supporting businesses.
- It will be important to ensure any short-term regulatory easements introduced in relation to the pandemic are fully consulted on before they are made permanent, and that councils are not impacted financially by them.
- The LGA and councils have previously put forward a series of proposals for streamlining and improving our outdated licensing frameworks. We would welcome the opportunity to take forward these proposals with Government as part of this programme of work.

The Electoral Integrity Bill

My Government will strengthen and renew democracy and the constitution. Legislations will be introduced to ensure the integrity of elections.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Improving the absent ballot process by increasing protection on postal and proxy voting, including banning postal vote 'harvesting'.
- Strengthening the laws on intimidation and undue influence.

- Requiring identification to vote in a polling station, as already required in Northern Ireland.
- Extending the ‘imprint’ requirement to digital political campaigning, and introducing measures to prevent foreign interference in elections. Improving access to voting for electors with disabilities.
- Removing the 15-year limit on the voting rights of British expats and making it easier to cast their vote.

LGA view

- We welcome the commitment to legislate to protect those standing for public office and their campaigners from intimidation and abuse and to clarify the existing offence of Undue influence. The LGA supported the Government’s proposals in the ‘Protect the debate’ consultation to develop new electoral legislation to tackle intimidation and continues to call the creation of a specific offence to protect elected members while in office.
- The commitment to introduce imprints for digital campaign material to ensure transparency for voters, campaigners and regulators is also positive. We would be keen to understand how this can be achieved while maintaining a level playing-field for all candidates.
- Councils are hugely experienced at running elections and working to support communities to participate in the democratic process effectively. The recent double year of elections, run in the extremely challenging context of the pandemic, have run smoothly and are testament to their incredible hard work and expertise.
- Councils fully support proposals to ensure disabled people can cast their vote. New duties on councils will of course need to be fully funded to help ensure they work effectively and their intention to increase voter participation is realised.
- Councils will want to understand more about how the proposals for voter identification, extension of the rights of overseas voters and changes to the postal and proxy voting systems might work in practice. Local government will also want to be assured that proper impact assessments have been completed to understand and mitigate the potential impact on protected groups and that councils are not adversely affected by the implementation or cost of complying with new duties or processes.

Integrated Review

My Ministers will implement the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

LGA view

- The Government’s commitment to taking forward its recent Integrated Review is positive. It will include looking at the role of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in preparing for and responding to emergencies.

- It will be important for the review to take into account the learning from councils' and LRFs' experiences of responding to the pandemic, as well as considering the steps necessary to taking a whole society approach to building resilience.