SUPPORTING ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES LEADERSHIP THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

1. The government recognises that providing funding and practical support to councils undergoing local government reorganisation is vital so that they can continue to deliver high-quality services to residents, both during transition as well as setting up new councils ready to take advantage of the benefits of local government reorganisation. This statement sets out the next steps that the government will take to strengthen the capacity, capability and recruitment of senior leaders across adult social care, children's services and public health, who will be leading vital parts of our reforms.

2. This is alongside the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's wider support offer, including an unprecedented £900,000 for each new council created through reorganisation. Full details of the wider package of support for councils can be found on gov.uk.

3. Unitary councils will improve public services, with one council being responsible for the front-line services that lead to healthier, more confident communities and enable people to reach their full potential. By bringing children's services, adult social care, public health and housing together under one council, leaders will be better placed to coordinate services around people's needs; for example, aligning housing with public health and adult social care, and integrating home adaptations, hospital discharge and community-based prevention services. Unitary councils will also cut duplication and free up more back-office money to shift money into frontline services.

4. Strong local leadership is essential to successful reorganisation and delivering high-quality public services and better outcomes for residents, including children and young people. While local government reorganisation will reduce the overall number of Chief Executives, Monitoring Officers, and Directors of Finance, it will increase demand for statutory leaders in children's services, adult social care, and public health, supported by strong deputies and wider leadership teams.

5. We recognise that this will create additional demand for senior leaders at a time when leadership pipelines are already under pressure. The government is therefore providing up to £10 million of funding to deliver a targeted package of support to help councils strengthen capacity during transition to help retain good children's services, adult social care and public health leaders, fill critical roles in councils, and develop the next generation of local public service leaders.

6. This package builds on significant existing government and sector investment in developing leaders across children's services, adult social care and public health. Existing support includes:
    - Department for Education's Director of Children's Services Leadership Programme and National Social Work Development offer.
    - Association of Directors for Children's Services' mentoring scheme.
    - Department of Health and Social Care's Aspiring Public Health Leaders Programme and Association of Directors of Public Health mentoring offer for new and interim Directors of Public Health.
    - Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' Accelerate programme and peer mentoring scheme.

- Local Government Association's Department for Health and Social Care funded public health peer review programme.

7. Each service area has differing existing support and faces distinct challenges and pressures. Our response is therefore tailored to each service, while strengthening senior leadership capacity across all three.

SUPPORTING ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

8. The government has already committed an allocation of £900,000 of transition funding for each new unitary council – we would expect councils to allocate a portion of this funding to support the transition of children's services, adult social care and public health.

9. There are several major reform programmes taking place across local government, including across children's social care e.g. the Families First Partnership Programme; Early Years – the best start in life; special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system reforms; the Care Quality Commission Inspections of Adult Social Care; as well as neighbourhood health reforms. Whilst these will result in positive reform and improved services for children, young people and adults, we recognise the pressure on local government and leaders to deliver these reforms alongside reorganisation.

10. That is why **government is announcing further funding for Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health Leadership Capacity and Continuity** from within our existing £63 million capacity fund. Areas will receive up to a further £150,000 per each new unitary council to help manage the practical demands of reorganisation while maintaining focus on critical frontline services and wider reform priorities. This will bring the total transition funding for LGR areas to more than £1 million per new unitary created.

11. This funding will enable LGR areas to provide additional capacity support for Directors of Children's Services, Directors of Adult Social Services and Directors of Public Health during reorganisation to manage transition alongside delivery of critical reforms and delivery of day-to-day services. Ensuring the right support for leaders will help retain good leaders already in the system and ensure successful delivery of reorganisation alongside wider reform agendas.

12. It is for local councils to determine how best to use this funding, in line with local circumstances and priorities. We would urge councils to consider whether to target the additional funding at just one or two of these services, where leadership capacity is under the greatest pressure locally – helping to retain strong leaders by giving them the support they need at this critical time. This could include strengthening leadership and programme capacity where reorganisation intersects with major reform programmes across these services. We know successful local reorganisation rests on successful transition of children's services, adult social care and public health, which is dependent on careful data migration, service disaggregation, system interoperability and information governance. Dedicated support in these areas can help leaders maintain focus on frontline service delivery while managing transition.

13. The government recognises the importance of building capability within local government and the wider public sector, rather than councils relying on costly external consultants. The government will therefore work with councils and sector partners to identify ways we can support

talented individuals from across the public sector to take on these key roles. This includes considering how to utilise secondments, and making the most of opportunities created by wider organisational change across the public sector, including within Integrated Care Boards. Further detail is set out on this below.

14. We will also explore how barriers to movement between organisations can be reduced, making it easier for people with relevant skills and experience to take on roles supporting local government reorganisation. In addition to providing leaders with extra capacity during transition, these roles will create valuable development opportunities for talented individuals across the sector, helping to build the leadership skills and experience needed to fill future senior roles in children's services, adult social care and public health.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

15. Targeted leadership development support is needed to ensure councils can appoint suitably experienced and qualified candidates to senior statutory roles ahead of vesting day in April 2028, while also supporting current leaders through transition.

16. The government is already investing in leadership development to support councils to develop the leaders needed to fill the additional posts created by local government reorganisation:

    - The Department for Education has expanded its Directors of Children's Services Leadership Programme for 2026/27; increasing the number of places for aspirant Directors and providing additional support for new directors on leading through change.

    - The Department of Health and Social Care has also expanded support for public health leaders, including prioritising access to the Aspiring Public Health Leaders Programme for applicants from local government reorganisation areas, expanding new in post mentoring support to interim Directors of Public Health, and supporting candidates pursuing specialist registration through the portfolio assessment route.

17. Building on this existing investment, **the government will fund up to £1.5m targeted development, mentoring and peer support for current, new and aspiring leaders**. Given the well-established and recently expanded leadership development offer already available for children's services, this additional investment is focused on adult social care, where no equivalent nationally coordinated offer exists, and public health, where a specialist and regulated workforce creates particular challenges in developing and expanding the leadership pipeline. This includes:

    - **A new rapid development programme for Director of Adult Social Services roles, and those new to post, starting in 2027.**
    - **An expanded peer support offer supporting adult social care leaders in local government reorganisation areas, including mentoring for new, less experienced and aspiring Directors of Adult Social Services;**
    - **Targeted development training for advanced public health practitioners. This will strengthen their skills to better support public health leaders (i.e. registered**

specialists including Directors of Public Health) and support progression into Public Health Principal roles.

18. Support will be targeted towards candidates and councils affected by local government reorganisation, with activity focused where recruitment and retention challenges are greatest. More details on this offer will be provided in due course.

19. Together, these measures will strengthen the pipeline of senior leadership roles across children's services, adult social care and public health needed for April 2028.

SUPPORTING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

20. The government will also help councils fill critical leadership posts by widening candidate pools, removing barriers to movement between sectors and reducing bureaucracy in recruitment processes. Backed by funding, this includes:
    - **Removing barriers to public health recruitment by funding additional capacity in the UK Public Health Register to accelerate the Specialist Registration by Portfolio Assessment route. This will help clear the current backlog, train additional assessors and reduce future bottlenecks. The government will also issue guidance on joint appointments to help councils make best use of specialist public health capacity;**
    - **Promoting a fair and transparent recruitment process through a recruitment charter between recruitment companies and councils (*as referenced in sector support note*) and,**
    - **Exploring ways to remove barriers to make it easier to transfer skills and experience across the public sector;**
    - **Working with councils and across the public sector to raise awareness of career pathways into leadership roles, including among sectors with transferable skills and experiences, such as the NHS and social housing.**

21. In addition to this, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published non-statutory guidance for councils signposting them to key legislation for managing the transfer of staff to new unitary councils, as well as issues councils will need to consider such as making appointments or retaining staff.

NEXT STEPS

22. Together, these measures will support the development of future leaders to fill the additional statutory roles needed ahead of April 2028, improve recruitment processes, and strengthen the resilience and capacity of existing leaders, supporting retention through transition. Alongside the £900,000 transition funding already announced, this package brings total financial support to over £1m per each new unitary council, helping councils build the leadership capacity needed to manage reorganisation while maintaining focus on frontline services.

23. We believe that this package is an important and significant next step ahead of April 2028. The government recognises that longer-term action is also needed to strengthen leadership pipelines across adult social care, public health, and children's services. We will therefore work across

departments and with councils, sector partners and professional bodies to develop a longer-term plan to address leadership pipeline challenges across these services beyond 2028.