



King's Speech – May 2026

The new parliamentary session started on 13 May 2026. The Government's legislative programme contains some Bills of direct relevance to local infrastructure, and others that raise important issues for the wider VCS. Specialised VCS organisations will also have roles in contributing to other Government aspirations on social housing, education and SEND reform [but not included in this briefing].

There are significant changes proposed for the organisation of policing and further legislation to support changes in health service provision and the abolition of NHS England.

However, most of the Bills, which represent a wide and extensive legislative programme will result in incremental change, and do not address many of the more serious issues within society as a whole.

Bills relevant to local infrastructure and the VCS

Small Business Protections (Late Payments) Bill

This Bill addresses late payments between businesses and with the intention to improve the flow of cash through supply chains.

The Bill will:

- Impose **maximum payment terms of 60 days**.
- Enforce **mandatory interest for late payments** at 8% above the Bank of England base rate.
- Introduce a time limit for raising invoice disputes, before payment is due.
- Give the **Small Business Commissioner new powers to investigate businesses suspected of conducting poor payment practices**; adjudicate disputes between businesses outside of the court process; and fine businesses that persistently pay their suppliers late or fail to comply with the legislation.

The measures apply only to UK-to-UK business transactions only. It is as yet unclear how this will apply to voluntary sector organisations that are not registered with Companies House as well as the charity commission.

Police Reform Bill

The Bill will:

- Ensure responsive and accountable local policing, by making sure that in every force there are **Local Policing Areas** headed by a senior officer and responsible to the public for delivering the policing their community needs. More officers will be deployed into

local neighbourhoods. **Local Policing Areas will form the foundation of fewer, larger police forces.**

- **Create a new national police force, the National Police Service**, that will deliver a unified response to the most serious crime, set stronger national standards, and ensure a more consistent service is received by the public regardless of where they live.
- **Abolish Police and Crime Commissioners** and put in place successor arrangements. Where there are already Mayoral Combined Authorities [or County Combined Authorities] PCC responsibilities will move to the directly elected mayors.
- Establish a new legal framework to underpin law enforcement **use of facial recognition and similar technologies**, making it clear when use of these technologies can be justified, including creation of a single, expert regulatory body to provide independent advice and oversight.

NHS Modernisation Bill

The NHS Modernisation Bill is integral to the Government's plans to improve care for patients through investment and modernisation. It will enhance patient safety and experience through a new Single Patient Record, enabling joined-up, proactive care and empowering patients. The Bill will also abolish NHS England.

The Bill will:

- **Build the Single Patient Record** - by enabling the NHS to bring together patients' health and social care records into one place to improve patient safety and experience. It will enable people to see their own health records securely on the NHS App. This will apply to those receiving maternity and frailty care by 2028, with learning from this applied to the wider rollout.
- **Abolish NHS England** - by transferring NHS England's functions into the Department of Health and Social Care or the wider system.
- Strengthen local democratic accountability in health systems by placing new requirements for **mayoral nominees to be on Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)**.
- Streamline the **patient safety** landscape and ensure better outcomes for patients and staff by transferring the Health Services Safety and Investigations Body functions to the Care Quality Commission.
- Embed patient voice in national decision-making by **transferring the functions of Healthwatch England to the Department of Health and Social Care**, and developing a new Patient Experience Directorate in the department to make the public's voice more directly involved in the formulation of policy.
- **Support ICBs to become strategic commissioners** by transferring responsibilities for all but the most specialised commissioning functions to ICBs, including primary care, dentistry, ophthalmology and pharmacy.
- Give ICBs the flexibility in how to manage their local systems by **refining the membership of their boards**. The Bill will also streamline the planning process to ensure there are ICB plans at neighbourhood and strategic level, eliminating the requirement on a local area to have an Integrated Care Partnership and allowing for greater flexibility.

- **Empower providers through Foundation Trust reform**, giving them more flexibility to design and deliver healthcare around local needs by removing the requirement for a Council of Governors. The power to deauthorise Foundation Trusts as a last resort option will also return to Ministers.
- **Ensure the voices of patients, service users and local people feed directly into the services they receive, by transferring the functions of Local Healthwatch to where local decisions are made.** The functions relating to **healthcare will transfer into ICBs**, while the functions relating to **social care move to local authorities**. Putting patients at the heart of care means devolving decisions to a local level, so those who truly understand the needs of their communities are trusted to shape and integrate services more effectively.

Digital Access to Services Bill

The GOV.UK app will become the front door to accessing public services with the Digital ID system at its foundation. Digital ID will be free to access for anyone who wishes to use it, providing a secure proof of identity for use across public services and the wider economy, without needing to carry around physical documents. People will be able to use the digital ID to prove their identity, whilst limiting the amount of information that is shared about them.

The Bill will:

- Establish the legal framework for the Government to create, issue and use Digital ID.
- Set out the information the Digital ID credential will contain, and provide for how it can be issued, maintained, stored, and verified, as well as eligibility requirements.
- Include provisions to create and maintain the Digital ID credential, enable its use, and aid public sector join-up, alongside appropriate safeguards.
- Include provisions to enable the use of Digital ID in priority areas across the public and wider economy, as well as establishing an audit function for Digital Right to Work checks.

One of the first use cases for the Digital ID will be for Digital Right to Work Checks by the end of this Parliament.

Immigration and Asylum Bill

This legislation will bring into effect the main reforms announced in the Restoring Order and Control statement in November 2025. This will build on the changes already made – making refugee status temporary and securing co-operation from a number of countries who had previously refused to take back those with no right to be in the UK.

The Bill will:

- **Introduce a new asylum model based on contribution, integration, and respect for UK laws.** It will build on reforms enacted in March 2026 to ensure that whilst protection will be provided, **entitlements will need to be earned**. This looks to be legislation to introduce the earned settlement proposals, that included volunteering. No further detail is available currently, but publications and announcements will be monitored closely.

- Replace the various forms of protection with a single ‘core protection’ model. This is intended to simplify decision-making; reduce the number of legal challenges and reduce costs by incentivising refugees to work.
- Define in law when protection can be revoked – making clear it is only for those who remain at risk in their home countries, and who obey UK laws.
- Require asylum seekers receiving taxpayer-funded accommodation and other support to contribute to the cost borne by the British taxpayer once they are able to do so.
- The Bill will also include measure to scale up the number of removals of those with no right to be in the UK, including forced removals.
- The application of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights will be tightened to prevent exploitation of the system, limit the definition of the right to family life, reform the modern slavery legislative framework and ensure children are protected more effectively.

Other Bills

Draft Conversion Practices Bill

The Bill will introduce a ban on abusive conversion practices, that will be trans-inclusive and apply to those exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. This will be published in draft form for pre-legislative scrutiny and apply to England and Wales only.

Public Office (Accountability) Bill

This is the Hillsborough Law that will introduce a duty of candour and individual accountability.

- Create new obligations on public bodies and officials to help investigations to find the truth; providing information and evidence with candour, proactively, and without favouring their own position. This includes a new criminal offence for non-compliance.
- Place public officials under new duties of candour relating to their day-to-day work. These “professional duties of candour” will be set out in mandatory ethical codes - with potential consequences up to and including gross misconduct for those who do not comply.
- Establish clear individual accountability for creating and spreading false narratives – through the creation of the offence of misleading the public.
- Reform the offence of “misconduct in public office” - including a new offence of serious impropriety, and another of breaching a duty to prevent death or serious harm. Both of these offences come with serious custodial sentences.
- Tackle the disparity in power between the state and bereaved families at inquests by providing bereaved families with access to non-means tested legal aid for all inquests where a public authority is an interested person, and placing a duty on public authorities to only use legal representation when necessary and proportionate.

Overnight Visitor Levy Bill

The bill will give mayors and potentially other local leaders of Foundation Strategic Authorities the power to introduce a levy to raise and invest money into projects that improve their areas, raise living standards and drive growth.