AMO & LLG Monitoring Officer Conference Programme
Friday, 17 July 2026 | 09:50 – 17:00

Plenary Room

09:00 – 09:45 Breakfast, registration and networking

Kick off the day with a relaxed breakfast and informal networking session. This is also the designated reception and sign-in period, giving attendees the chance to check in, grab a coffee, and start making connections before the programme begins.

09.50 – 10.00 Welcome

Helen Bradley, Chair of Association of Monitoring Officers

10.00 – 11:00 Holding Your Nervous System

An hour-long light-hearted talk on how to hold your nervous system when everyone around you is losing theirs. You will discover your own somatic responses to challenge and change, avoid burnout, and deal with those people who get on your… nerves! You will be taught how to regulate your nervous system and be balanced.

This session gives you practical ways to recognise and regulate those responses so you can stay clear, steady and effective, even in challenging environments. Practical. Grounded. And delivered with humour.

Speaker: Becky Walsh, Council Culture UK

Chair: Rachel McKoy, Executive Director, Association of Monitoring Officers

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 – 12.15 The role of the Monitoring Officer in unitary councils

The government's stated position is to create unitary councils across the whole of England. By the date of the conference, the emerging position should, we hope, be clearer in many areas! This session will explore the particular challenges (and

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opportunities) of being a Monitoring Officer in a unitary authority and the differences from that role in current two tier arrangements.

We will also cover some of the transitional issues to be faced by an MO and their teams in the move to unitary status.

Speaker: **Bethan Evans, Consultant, Governance Training and Consultancy Ltd**

Chair: **Rachel McKoy, Executive Director, Association of Monitoring Officers**

12.15 – 13.15 First out of the blocks – Surrey's experiences of LGR

Surrey was the first area to be informed of the decision on its new structure as a result of the government's latest LGR programme, back in October 2025. It's been helpful to get a head start but brings with it pressure of being under the spotlight. Those involved from a legal perspective share their invaluable experiences. Don't be surprised to hear analogies to moving house!

Speakers: **Asmat Hussain, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Surrey County Council**
Amanda Scally, Assistant Director Legal Services, Surrey County Council
Philip McCourt, Legal Director, Bevan Brittan
Kirtpal Kaur-Aujla, Partner, Bevan Brittan

Chair: **Paul Turner, Director of Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer, Essex County Council**

13.15 – 14.15 LUNCH

14.15 – 15.00 AI Governance: Navigating the Legal Landscape for Monitoring Officers

In this session, Matt Whelan and Tayler-Mae Porter will explore the legal and regulatory landscape surrounding artificial intelligence, with a focus on what effective AI governance means in practice for monitoring officers. Drawing on their experience advising public bodies, they will examine risk management, accountability

frameworks, and the practical steps organisations can take to adopt AI responsibly, equipping monitoring officers with the confidence to navigate this rapidly evolving area.

Speakers: **Matt Whelan, Senior Associate, Trowers & Hamlins**
Tayler-Mae Porter, Associate, Trowers & Hamlins

Chair: **Alison Stuart, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, London Borough of Islington**

15.00 – 15.45 **The Employment Rights Act: Implications for Monitoring Officers and Statutory Roles**

This session will focus on the legal implications of the rights introduced under the new Employment Rights Act and how organisations can effectively navigate them to protect the employer. As one of the most significant and high-impact developments for employers—particularly in the public sector—it will examine the practical steps authorities can take to manage risk, ensure compliance, and adapt governance arrangements. It will also reflect on the specific considerations for monitoring officers and other statutory roles within this evolving legal framework.

Speaker: **Kerren Daly, Partner, Browne Jacobson**

Chair: **Paul Turner, Director of Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer, Essex County Council**

15.45 - 16.15 **Break**

16.15 - 17.00 **Monitoring Officer to Chief Executive – Learnings, Reflections and Advice**

In discussion with Tom Hoult of Venn Group, Kevin O'Keefe and Kim Sawyer, both former Monitoring Officers and Chief Executives, will reflect on their careers and the lessons they learned moving from governance leadership into the Chief Executive role.

The session will explore the skills, experiences and leadership behaviours that supported their progression, the challenges they encountered along the way, and how their time as Chief Executives changed their perspective on the Monitoring Officer role.

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Expect practical insights, honest reflections and advice for anyone looking to broaden their leadership influence within local government.

Speakers: **Tom Hoult, Senior Managing Consultant, Venn Group**
Kim Sawyer, Former Chief Executive, Current Interim Monitoring Officer
Kevin O'Keefe, Former Chief Executive, Current Interim Monitoring Officer

Chair: **Heloise MacAndrew, Director of Law and Governance, Lancashire County Council**

17:00 **Conference Close**

Helen Bradley, Chair of Association of Monitoring Officers

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Discussion Room

09:00 – 09:45 Breakfast and networking

Kick off the day with a relaxed breakfast and informal networking session. This is also the designated reception and sign-in period, giving attendees the chance to check in, grab a coffee, and start making connections before the programme begins.

09.50 – 10.00 Welcome

Conference welcome will take place in the main plenary room.

10.00 – 11:00 Open Session

A drop-in, informal space for reflection, discussion, and peer connection alongside the main programme. No set agenda—participants shape the conversation. Operates under **Chatham House Rule** to encourage open and honest dialogue in a confidential setting.

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 - 12.15 Case Law Update for Monitoring Officers

This session will provide an overview of recent case law relevant to Monitoring Officers and the governance framework within which they operate. It will highlight key developments and themes emerging from the courts, offering insight into how legal decisions may influence practice, interpretation, and decision-making.

Speakers: Claire Ward, Partner, Anthony Collins
Alison Stuart, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, London Borough of Islington

Chair: **Rachel McKoy, Executive Director, Association of Monitoring Officers**

12.15 – 13.15 **Open Session**

13.15 – 14.15 **LUNCH**

14.15 – 15.15 **Know Your Triggers. Strengthen Your Response**

A more interactive session with Becky Walsh to deepen learning and application. This session will include guided reflection on personal stress patterns, practical nervous system regulation exercises and Q&A and discussion. Delegates will leave with a clearer understanding of themselves and how to manage pressure in role.

Speaker: **Becky Walsh, Council Culture UK**

Chair: **Helen Bradley, Chair of Association of Monitoring Officers**

15.15 – 15.45 **You Are Not Alone: Looking Out for Your Wellbeing During Major Change - Some Practical Tips**

With change being driven in local authorities through the emergence of the unitary approach, who is looking after you and colleagues' wellbeing through these landmark changes?

The session explores your current knowledge of the support available and suggests other routes for independent and confidential advice. It will also offer practical tips on the early warning signs of stress in you and colleagues and look at guidelines available for employers and employees on supporting staff wellbeing during turbulent times.

Speakers: **Nick Gallagher, CEO, The Solicitors' Charity**
Anita McCallum, Director of Impact & Development, The Solicitors' Charity

Chair: Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive, Fylde Borough Council

15.45 - 16.15 **Break**

16.15 - 17.00 **The Abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in May 2028 – what happens next and what does it mean for Monitoring Officers?**

Following the abolition of PCCs powers will be absorbed by regional mayors. In areas without a regional mayor the powers will be devolved to Police and Crime Boards made up of local elected council leaders. Specific governance arrangements are being worked out for Wales. The session will explain the emerging governance and look at the likely role and responsibilities of Mayors and Police and Crime Boards. They will examine the role of monitoring officers in applying the governance. What will their duties be and what will happen to the existing conduct regime that holds Mayors and PCCs to account?

Speaker: **John Riddell, Partner, Weightmans**

Chair: **Helen Bradley, Chair of Association of Monitoring Officers**

17:00 **Conference Close**

Conference close will take place in the main plenary room.