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# Implications of the Government's September Announcement on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

In February, NASACRE advised SACREs to remain alert to the potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on local structures, governance, and statutory responsibilities. We highlighted that any move towards new unitary arrangements would require careful planning, clear communication with local authorities, and early consideration of how SACREs would be constituted within any new governance landscape.

The Government's announcement on 7 September 2026 represents a significant change in direction. Ministers have now paused the LGR programme, withdrawn decisions in several areas, and instructed councils to cease implementation work while a full review takes place. Updated legal advice has prompted the Government to reassess whether the current programme is sufficiently robust, lawful, and aligned with wider ambitions for devolution and "rewiring the state."

This pause has important implications for SACREs.

## **1. Existing SACRE arrangements remain in place**

All current council structures will continue unchanged for the foreseeable future. Local elections in May 2027 will proceed on existing boundaries, and no shadow arrangements should be established at this time.

## **2. Any previously announced reorganisation is now on hold**

Decisions affecting Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and 14 further areas have been withdrawn or paused. Councils have been instructed to stop implementation activity until the review concludes. This includes governance redesign, staffing changes, and preparatory work for new unitary SACREs.

## **3. SACREs should avoid making structural assumptions**

In February, NASACRE advised SACREs to begin thinking about how they might operate within new unitary arrangements. That advice now requires updating: SACREs should not assume that any previously proposed structures will proceed. The Government has signalled that the review may revisit fundamental assumptions about the shape and pace of reorganisation.

## **4. Continue normal statutory business**

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SACREs should continue fulfilling their statutory duties as usual, including monitoring RE, advising the local authority, and preparing annual reports. No changes to SACRE constitutions should be made in anticipation of reorganisation.

### **5. Maintain communication with your local authority**

Although councils have been told to pause implementation work, many will be reassessing transformation programmes, staffing, and governance planning. SACREs should ensure they remain in close dialogue with their local authority to understand any local implications.

### **6. Expect further guidance once the Government's review concludes**

The Government has not indicated a timeline for the review. SACREs should expect a period of uncertainty until ministers confirm the future direction of LGR. NASACRE will issue updated advice as soon as further clarity is available.

### **Summary**

The Government's September announcement represents a pause, not an abandonment, of LGR. However, it does mean that no structural changes affecting SACREs will proceed at this time, and previously announced plans may be significantly revised. SACREs should continue their work as normal, maintain strong communication with their local authority, and await further guidance once the national review concludes.

NASACRE will continue to monitor developments closely and support SACREs through this period of uncertainty.

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