

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Leadership Board

SIG Name:	County Councils Network (CCN)
Lead Member:	Cllr Paul Carter CBE, CCN Chairman
Lead Officer:	Simon Edwards, Director

Overview

Vision

To ensure CCN is an influential and respected network, advocating innovative policy solutions on the challenges facing local government and the wider public sector.

Aim

Ensure Counties have the powers and resources to meet the needs and aspirations of their residents on issues of particular importance to our councils and their communities.

CCN Core Functions

The 2016/17 business plan set out the 'core business' and activity that CCN delivers on behalf of our member councils as a special interest group (SIG) of the LGA, including;

National Advocacy & Representation

Our network acts as the informed and representative voice for County Councils and Unitary Counties in England. We represent and advocate on behalf our members within the LGA; make direct representations to Whitehall departments; and collaborate closely with national stakeholders.

Research & Policy Development

Combining our national level expertise and our members' frontline policy experience we produce and commission sector-based, forward thinking, research on behalf of our members and the wider public sector to provide innovative policy solutions to key challenges facing our residents.

Sharing & Promoting Best Practice

Through various platforms, including an Annual Conference, workshops, seminars, publications, research and reports we identify and share best practice across our network to enable our members, and wider public sector, to tackle the economic and social problems faced by local communities.

National Collaboration and Commissioning

The CCN works with a wide network of industry stakeholders. This includes the LGA, ACCE, SCT, ADASS, DCN and Professional Associations, as well as think-tanks, private and public sector local government partners. We seek to commission work to support our research, policy and advocacy to supplement key skills of the CCN team.

Communications & Public Affairs

CCN acts to raise the profile of the network and represent County and County Unitary Councils in the broadcast, online and print media; articulating members' views, showcasing best practice, neutralising general threats to our members' reputation. CCN seeks to influence national stakeholders through a comprehensive public affairs strategy - engaging civil servants, Ministers and other key influencers.

Political Leadership

Each Council in CCN membership nominates four elected members to serve on the **CCN Council**, and the Leader of each member council sits on the **CCN Executive Committee**. Top up places are used to ensure political proportionality on both CCN Council and Executive Committees.

The CCN Council AGM elects the **CCN Management Committee** which comprises the Chairman and a Vice Chairmen from each of the political groups. The members of the CCN Management Committee elected at the AGM September 2016 are:

- **Chairman**
Cllr Paul Carter (Kent County Council)
- **Vice Chairmen**
Cllr Philip Atkins (Staffordshire County Council)
Cllr David Borrow (Lancashire County Council)
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Wiltshire Council)

CCN also has eight Spokesmen who have been appointed to lead on specific issues in relation to the CCN work programme.

CCN Officer Team

The work of the network is supported by a small core team based in Local Government House in Westminster (temporarily in Layden House).

Director	Simon Edwards
Head of Policy & Communications	James Maker
Senior Policy Officer	Elizabeth Hunter-Gray
Senior Policy Officer	Michael Chard
Media & Communications Officer	Ian Burbidge
Public Affairs Officer	Victoria Moloney
Business Support Officer	Sara Brouillette

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

Over the past 12 months CCN has succeeded in delivering the core objectives set out in our Business Plan and Work Programme, continuing our progress as an effective membership, research and policy development organisation and delivering real, tangible changes in government policy. Reflecting the challenges at the time, and those that have emerged since, CCN has;

- Increased the national profile of CCN and enhanced its position as the leading voice for county and county unitary authorities. Our profile and engagement across Whitehall, Parliament and third-party stakeholders has been significantly improved, with CCN extending its reach within Government Departments, including DCLG, the Treasury, Departments for Education, Health, and Business.
- Commissioned and published a raft of original research to support our lobbying and advocacy objectives.
- Significant increase in the media profile of the CCN with an exponential rise in national and trade media hits.
- Ensured the financial pressures facing county authorities are taken fully into consideration during settlement negotiations. Changes to Local Government Finance and increasing focus on social care funding demonstrate that the pressures facing upper-tier councils are understood more acutely than during the previous Parliament.
- Mainstreamed the debate on fairer funding and strengthen CCN's advocacy. Working with the Society of County Treasurers (SCT), we have helped deliver a commitment to the needs-based review and recently received confirmation by the Secretary of State that the Government will consult on our preferred cost-drivers approach following CCN Advocacy.
- Consistently maintained a focus on the inadequacy of social care funding, arguing for new additional funding and highlighting the unique challenges faced by rural county authorities. Working with the LGA and other key stakeholders CCN was instrumental in helping secure an additional £2bn in funding for Social Care. Moreover, a recent Communities & Local Government Select Committee report backed our calls for the Better Care Fund to be frontloaded and for the Relative Needs-Funding Formula to be updated.
- Defended the role of county authorities in education, constructively challenging the Government over forced academisation leading to an abandonment of the policy. We have also challenged inequities in the new schools funding formula.
- Successfully intervened in the debate on local government reorganisation, producing independent and impartial evidence to inform the national debate and supporting member councils who wish to pursue this agenda.
- Positively rebranded the organisation and established a new narrative centred on the *Your County Matters* campaign. This campaign has achieved traction across the sector and put in place an effective platform for CCN to communicate our core policy positions and messages over the coming period.