

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Leadership Board

SIG Name:	County Councils Network (CCN)
Lead Member:	Cllr Paul Carter, CCN Chairman
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Membership

Buckinghamshire CC	Gloucestershire CC	Oxfordshire CC
Cambridgeshire CC	Hampshire CC	Shropshire C
Central Bedfordshire C	Herefordshire C	Somerset CC
Cheshire East C	Hertfordshire CC	Staffordshire CC
Cornwall C	Kent CC	Suffolk CC
Cumbria CC	Lancashire CC	Surrey CC
Derbyshire CC	Leicestershire CC	Warwickshire CC
Devon CC	Lincolnshire CC	West Sussex CC
Dorset C	Norfolk CC	Wiltshire C
Durham CC	North Yorkshire CC	Worcestershire CC
East Riding of Yorkshire C	Northamptonshire CC	
East Sussex CC	Northumberland CC	
Essex CC	Nottinghamshire CC	

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 2019/20 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 Simon Henig (Durham 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.

Director	Simon Edwards
Head of Policy & Communications	James Maker
Senior Policy Officer	Jonathan Rallings
Senior Policy Officer	Peter French
Senior Policy & Public Affairs Officer	James Holden
Media & Communications Officer	Ian Burbidge

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.

CCN has increased our national profile and enhanced our 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 MHCLG, the Treasury, Departments for Education, Health, and Business.

CCN has seen a significant increase in our media profile, with an exponential rise in national and trade media hits.

CCN has undertaken a range of major research and policy projects, leading to the delivery of several highly influential and respected reports, including our ground breaking [Independent Review of Spending Need and Funding](#).

Key activities/outcomes over the last 12 months include:-

- Winter Pressures Funding: CCN advocacy with partners across the sector highlighted winter pressures in the health and social care system. This led to the in-year investment of £240m, funding that will be repeated in 2019/20. CCN councils will receive 44% of this funding.
- Social Care Funding: This year, CCN's targeted advocacy helped the sector secure £410m of additional funding for social care. Our advocacy was directly responsible for ensuring that this funding was distributed via the adult social care relative needs formula - and contained the flexibility to be used across children's social care.

- Roads Investment: Our dedicated advocacy on the funding pressures highlighting planned reductions in road maintenance helped secure in-year investment of £420m for local highways. Our member councils received 71% of this funding, with the government distributing the funding according to road length; a direct recognition of the pressures in county authorities.
- Negative Revenue Support Grant: This year saw confirmation that Negative RSG would be cancelled. This followed a two-year campaign on behalf of those member councils affected by the policy.
- Fairer Funding: CCN has maintained and grown the momentum on our fair funding review campaign. Our advocacy resulted in the recent consultation setting out welcome proposals that have the potential to deliver a much fairer funding formula for counties.
- Social Care Green Paper: Earlier this year CCN published its own positioning paper to influence the development of the long-trailed reforms to social care. The report has been downloaded over 1,150 times and position CCN as a key stakeholder on the future of health and social care.
- High-Needs Funding: CCN research highlighted escalating overspends in high-needs education funding. In December this helped secure an additional £250m of funding over two years.
- Business Rates: 12 out of the 15 new 75% business rate retention pilots are in county areas. CCN has specifically argued that the London pilots should be reduced to the same level as those open to counties, with the resources reinvested to ensure more counties benefit.
- Social Mobility: CCN on behalf of the County APPG conducted a comprehensive inquiry into social mobility in county areas. With support from Localis and evidence submitted by member councils, the report made a major impact across the sector and Parliament.
- Housing: CCN has become a national stakeholder on housing policy, building on its advocacy on strategic planning. We launched two research reports and hosted the first national conference dedicated to the strategic role of county and county unitary authorities in housing, planning and infrastructure.
- LEP Review: Following several years of advocacy on the importance of coterminosity of LEP boundaries, the government announced in its LEP review it would seek to eliminate overlaps.
- Reform: CCN continued to shape the national narrative on local government reorganisation.
We have supported Dorset Council, securing their continuing membership from April 2019 and our advocacy helped turn the Government's minded-to decision in Buckinghamshire into a final decision.
- Devolution: After officially adopting CCN's call for a more open, transparent and structured approach to devolution through the publication of a 'common framework', the network has continued to make the case for ambitious devolution deals for counties. CCN has been engaging government to ensure non-mayoral and combined authorities' models are considered, while ensuring the integrity of county geographies.