

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Board

SIG Name:	County Councils Network (CCN)
Lead Member:	Cllr David Williams, CCN Chairman
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Membership

Buckinghamshire C	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 2020/21 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 (Hertfordshire County Council)
- **Vice Chairmen**
Cllr Nicholas Rushton (Leicestershire County Council)
Cllr Simon Henig (Durham County Council)
Cllr Jerry Roodhouse (Warwickshire County Council)

CCN also has a number of Spokespersons 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
Policy Officer	Ellie Skinner
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 coverage, and undertaken a range of major research and policy projects, leading to the delivery of several highly influential and respected reports.

Our activity before the general election delivered significant financial improvements for our member councils, while our policy development and campaigns positioned the network favourably to engage the new government.

Our campaigns and policy development have centred on demonstrating the unique and growing financial pressures facing our member councils. CCN's study with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on future funding forecasts are now widely quoted as the benchmark in evidencing the financial pressures facing councils. This report was instrumental in securing an additional £1bn of core resources in the Spending Round.

Our analysis of adult social care funding, published in September 2019, helped secure the continuation of £410m of temporary grants.

The dedicated advocacy and report on special educational needs and disabilities, CCN published in May 2019, helped secure an additional £700m for the sector.

CCN has also prioritised advocacy on funding for potholes and road maintenance, with the Government subsequently announcing a £2bn fund.

CCN has continued to shape the national narrative on fair funding with our *Fair Futures for Counties* campaign and targeted interventions that demonstrate the inequalities in council funding.

Our long-held campaign to secure a fundamental review of the New Homes Bonus was heeded by government, with a clear commitment to a complete review.

CCN has continued to enhance its reputation in core policy areas such as adult and children's social care, economic growth, housing and devolution, while expanding its portfolio of policy development into new territory.

We have worked with leading external agencies and national bodies to commission original research, leading to the development and advocacy of innovative policy positions and traction for our key proposals.

Our report with Grant Thornton on place-based growth is one of the most comprehensive analysis of the economic opportunities and challenges in non- metropolitan areas. Examining in detail the role of county and unitary authorities in promoting and securing local growth, it represents a key document to influence the debate on levelling-up and the Devolution White Paper.

Elsewhere, we have delivered new research in partnership with the LGA on home-to-school transport and collaborated with the Royal Town Planning Institute to publish a report on infrastructure planning.

CCN research with Shared Intelligence on the transfer of public health services to counties helped secure a commitment to ensure these services remain with local government.

Our internally produced 'CCN Analysis' reports provided members with important insights on issues such as house prices and broadband speeds.

As a result of Covid19 much of our focus turned to supporting member councils' response, sharing best practice, highlighting financial pressures and advocating policy solutions.

CCN was instrumental in securing additional Covid-19 related funding for all Councils, conducted detailed work to ensure Delta returns were robust and credible, and commissioned a report from GT which models the short, medium and long-term pressures facing member councils.