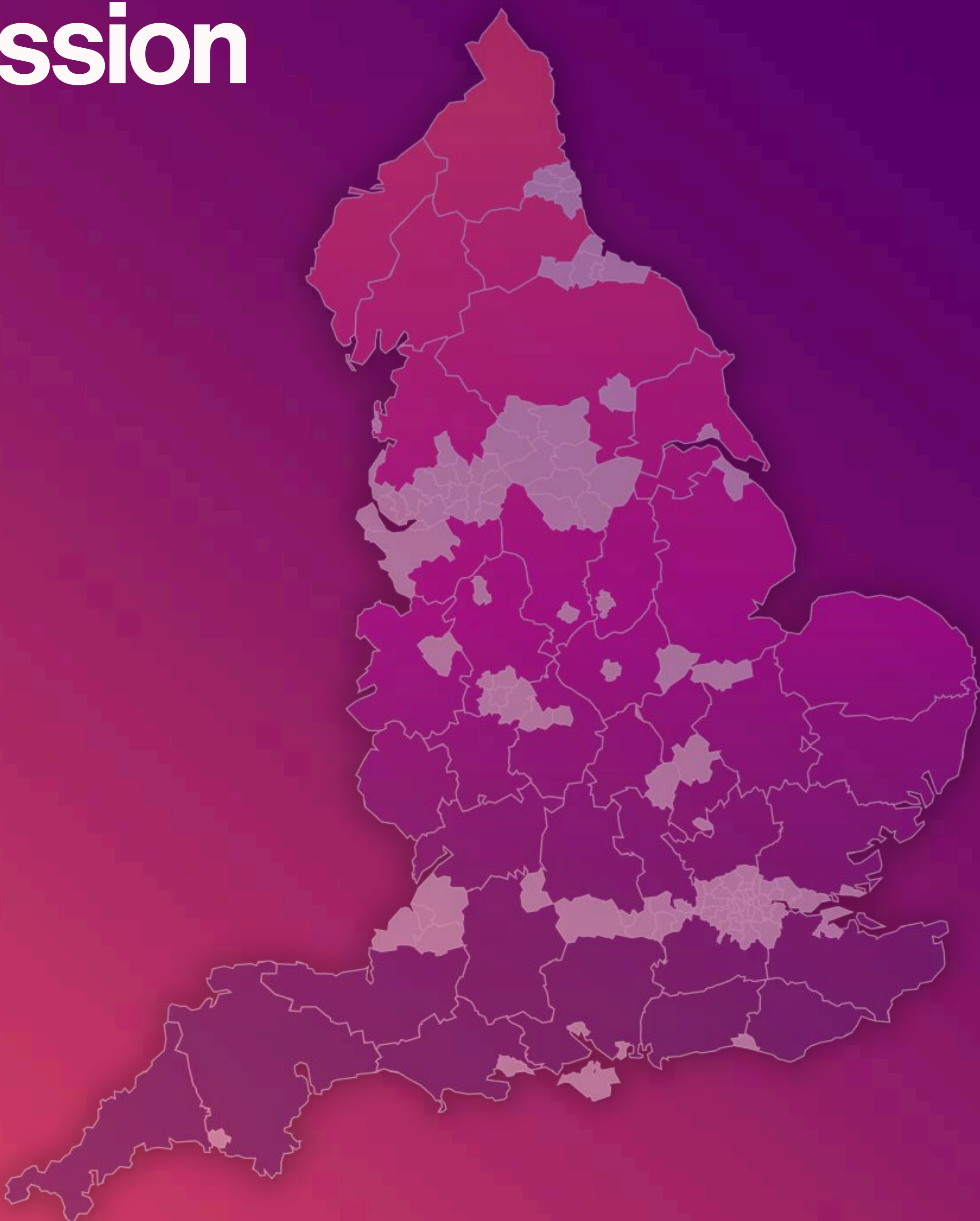
STRONGER COUNTIES
STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Autumn Budget Submission

CCN
THE VOICE OF COUNTIES



A Five Point Plan for National Renewal

Introduction

County and rural England will be central to the government's ambitions for economic growth, public service reform and national renewal.

Councils in county areas serve the majority of England's population, deliver many of the country's most important public services, and are home to significant economic assets, strategic infrastructure, innovation clusters and growth opportunities.

Yet they continue to face substantial financial pressures, rising demand for statutory services and unique challenges in delivering services across diverse and rural geographies at a time of competing pressures and complex reform programmes.

Published in July, the County Councils Network's (CCN)[1] Five Point Plan for National Renewal identified five policy areas where government action can unlock growth, improve outcomes and strengthen public finances: delivering sustainable local government finance and reorganisation; ambitious county devolution and public service reform; reforming adult social care; improving outcomes in SEND and children's services; and building communities.

Reflecting the policies announced since the new administration took office, this submission outlines how the Autumn Budget can take the opportunity to translate those ambitions into practical action to meet the unique needs of our areas; delivering growth and better public services in every postcode.

Executive Summary

1 | Delivering sustainable funding & reorganisation

County and rural authorities face a growing structural funding gap as demand-led services consume an ever-greater share of council budgets. PwC modelling suggests costs will increase by more than £7bn between 2025/26 and 2028/29, driven largely by adult social care and children's services. Yet government support covers only a fraction of these pressures, leaving CCN members overreliant on council tax rises to fund statutory services. At the same time, the current programme of local government reorganisation risks imposing substantial transition and disaggregation costs, potentially undermining the financial sustainability of newly created councils and diverting resources away from frontline services.

Budget Asks

Provide an uplift in core funding for councils
- Additional core funding to address in-year demand and inflationary pressures.
- Reduce excessive reliance on council tax increases.
- Protect statutory services while enabling investment in prevention and growth.

Reinstate the remoteness indicator in funding formulae
- Recognise the higher costs of delivering services across rural geographies.
- Address an estimated £300m funding loss resulting from its removal from Fair Funding Review allocations.

Deliver a transparent review of local government reorganisation.
- Reassess proposals against established criteria.
- Ensure financially sustainable unitary councils.
- Fully fund transition and implementation costs.
- Establish realistic timescales and minimise costly disaggregation.

2 | Ambitious county devolution and public service reform

County areas account for almost half of England's population and a significant share of national economic output, yet many continue to lack access to the powers, funding and freedoms available elsewhere. Twenty-two county and unitary councils covering 17 million residents remain without devolution settlements, while infrastructure constraints, limited fiscal powers and an overly urban-focused policy approach continue to restrict growth. Counties generate a disproportionately large share of tax revenues but receive a comparatively smaller share of place-based spending, demonstrating the need for deeper and more equitable devolution arrangements.

Budget Asks

Extend devolved powers and funding
- Accelerate devolution settlements for remaining county areas.
- Provide parity of transport, skills and investment powers with metropolitan areas.
- Allow local flexibility over governance arrangements and geographies.

Recognise county economies in future devolution plans
- Ensure the Devolution White Paper reflects the unique nature of county economies.
- Prioritise infrastructure, connectivity and labour market challenges facing rural and polycentric areas.

Deliver ambitious fiscal devolution
- Enable retention of a share of locally raised taxes.
- Ensure councils directly benefit from fiscal devolution alongside strategic authorities.
- Unlock more than £4bn annually for growth and local services.

Put councils at the centre of public service reform and rewiring the state
- Establish a clear division of responsibilities between strategic authorities and constituent councils.
- Give councils direct access to integration and reform funding.
- Ensure devolution enhances rather than duplicates local leadership.

3 Reforming adult social care

Adult social care remains the largest and fastest-growing pressure facing county and rural councils. Rising demand from an ageing population, increasing complexity of need, workforce shortages and provider market pressures are driving significant cost increases, with spending pressures expected to rise by £6.3bn across CCN councils by 2030/31. County and rural areas face additional challenges in delivering large-scale reforms due to dispersed populations, fragmented care markets and higher delivery costs. Concerns also remain about the affordability of Fair Pay Agreements and the impact of local government reorganisation on service delivery and transformation programmes.

Budget Asks

Work with councils on sustainable long-term reform
- Engage CCN and its members in modelling the costs and impacts of reform options.
- Ensure reforms are practical, affordable and locally accountable.
- Maintain council leadership of service delivery and prevention.

Fully fund adult social care pressures
- Provide additional resources for rising demand and inflation.
- Fully fund the costs associated with Fair Pay Agreements.
- Cover additional costs arising from reorganisation and service disaggregation.

Reform the Better Care Fund and invest in rural neighbourhood health
- Strengthen councils' role in neighbourhood health and prevention.
- Protect investment in community-based care.
- Establish a parallel £50m programme tailored to rural and county delivery models.

4 Improving outcomes in SEND and children's services

The SEND system is under severe financial and operational strain as demand continues to rise rapidly. Numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans are at record levels, high-needs spending has more than doubled over the last decade and council deficits are projected to reaccumulate quickly despite recent government support. Children's services are also experiencing growing complexity and demand, while SEND home-to-school transport costs have become one of the fastest-rising budget pressures. County and rural councils face additional challenges because current funding arrangements do not adequately reflect their level of need or the costs of delivering services across large geographic areas.

Budget Asks

Confirm commitment to SEND reform and future deficit and funding support
- Reaffirm implementation of SEND reforms.
- Provide clarity on future high-needs deficit write-off arrangements.
- Review funding formulae to deliver a fairer settlement for county and rural councils.

Address SEND transport pressures
- Provide additional funding for SEND home-to-school transport.
- Include transport costs within future SEND funding reforms.
- Reform EHCP and tribunal arrangements to better consider transport impacts.

Continue children's social care reforms
- Invest in family help, prevention and early intervention programmes.
- Provide resources to support implementation of reforms.
- Address long-standing funding disparities affecting county and rural councils.

5 | Building sustainable communities

County and rural areas are expected to accommodate a significant share of future housing growth, yet infrastructure investment is failing to keep pace. Councils face growing pressures from infrastructure deficits, rising homelessness, increasing temporary accommodation costs and declining rural transport networks. Housing affordability remains a major challenge in many communities, while planning reforms risk placing greater pressure on local areas without corresponding investment in roads, transport, schools, healthcare and utilities. Without long-term infrastructure funding and stronger support for affordable housing, growth risks becoming unsustainable and public confidence in development weakened.

Budget Asks

Provide a long-term homelessness settlement
- Reform temporary accommodation subsidy arrangements.
- Fully fund rising homelessness pressures.
- Ensure county areas receive a fair share of affordable housing investment.

Review the impact of planning reforms
- Monitor the impact of the revised National Planning Policy Framework.
- Ensure growth is supported by infrastructure, planning capacity and affordable housing delivery.
- Engage with councils in county and rural areas on implementation and future reform.

Establish a County Infrastructure Fund
- Create a dedicated long-term infrastructure funding stream.
- Reform developer contributions to better capture growth-related infrastructure costs.
- Support delivery of roads, schools, healthcare facilities and utilities needed for sustainable development.

Deliver a County Bus Strategy
- Introduce a long-term funding settlement for rural bus services.
- Support socially necessary routes and innovative transport solutions.
- Reverse service decline and improve connectivity for residents and businesses.

Contents

1 Delivering sustainable funding & reorganisation

The challenge

County and rural authorities face growing financial pressures from rising demand for adult social care, children's services and SEND, alongside increasing workforce and inflationary costs. These services now account for the vast majority of expenditure growth, leaving councils with limited capacity to invest in prevention, economic growth and wider local priorities.

The outcome of the Fair Funding Review left CCN authorities overwhelming reliant on council tax increases to fund core services, despite demand pressures being driven by national policy and demographic change.

Against this backdrop, local government reorganisation is now likely to intensify the short to medium term financial pressures facing county and district authorities. The minded-to decisions will result in significantly higher implementation, transition and on-going costs, while there are concerns around the financial sustainability of many new unitary councils from April 2028.

The case for investment & reform

- Modelling by PwC for CCN shows that the costs of providing services in CCN member councils are projected to increase by around 23% (over £7bn) between 2025/26 and 2028/29 in CCN member councils, driven primarily by rising demand in adult social care, children’s services and SEND, alongside inflation and workforce cost pressures.[2]

- Government funding is not keeping pace with costs. New grant funding will cover only around 2% (£133m) of additional costs in county areas. This equates to around 2p of government funding for every £1 of new cost pressures faced by CCN member councils, compared with approximately 42p per £1 for urban metropolitan borough councils. This leaves councils heavily exposed to rising service demands without sufficient national support.[3]

- Over 90% of funding increases in county areas is projected to come from local taxation, based on assumptions of sustained annual rises that are widely considered unrealistic and unsustainable.[4] Recent analysis by SCT shows the decision to include the one-off impact of council tax premiums on second homes within long-term council tax base assumptions overestimated our members councils core spending power by around £600m over three-year settlement.

- Previous analysis by CCN showed the creation of 58 unitary councils across the remaining two-tier areas could create £3.7bn of disaggregation costs over five years, while the ‘one-off’ transition costs could reach £660m. With over half a billion pounds in permanent additional disaggregation costs, this scenario delivers no long-term efficiency savings.[5]

- In contrast, the same research showed that creating 29 councils based on a minimum population of 500,000 would deliver a net-saving of £1.85bn over five years. Disaggregation costs over five years reduce dramatically to £1bn, while one-off transition costs are 28% lower.

Budget Asks

Provide an uplift in core funding for councils to meet growing in-year financial pressures and reduce the reliance on council tax.

While the previous government set out the first multi-year financial settlement for local authorities in a decade, it is clear that in-year financial challenges and the wider fiscal environment are adding growing pressures to an already challenging outcome from the Fair Funding Review for many CCN member councils.

The annual budget survey by the Society of County Treasurers (SCT) shows that 60% of county and rural unitary councils are very concerned over increased demand adding additional in-year pressure to budgets (35% concerned). Some 40% are very concerned over additional inflationary pressures (57% concerned). Faced with these growing in-year pressures and competing transformation and reform plans, including reorganisation, 35% are very concerned and 48% concerned they will not be able deliver earmarked savings. [6]

CCN member councils are already over-reliant on council tax income to meet these demand-led pressures, and this has been compounded by the government including unrealistic tax base growth within Core Spending Power. Analysis by SCT suggests the government's decision to wrongly include the one-off impact of council tax premiums on second homes within long-term council tax base assumptions has overestimated our councils' income by £600m over three-year settlement.

This creates a false impression that councils have greater spending power than they will actually have over the multi-year settlement to meet demand and inflationary pressures.

Moreover, whilst expanded fiscal devolution provides opportunities to create a new funding model for councils, these revenue streams must be complementary rather than a replacement to existing government funding. Equally, constituent authorities in Strategic Authorities must benefit directly from fiscal devolution - receiving a fair, proportionate and dedicated share of locally raised revenues to spend on local priorities.*

Therefore, an in-year uplift in core funding is essential to ensure councils can meet their statutory responsibilities, maintain financial resilience and reduce the reliance on council tax to fund services. Without additional core funding for the services outlined further on this submission, councils will be forced to make increasingly difficult decisions about service provision, investment and prevention. This risks storing up greater costs elsewhere in the public sector, including the NHS, criminal justice system and welfare system. A sustained uplift should therefore be seen not simply as investment in local government, but as an investment in the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of public services as a whole.

Reinstate the remoteness indicator across all funding formulae to fully recognise the additional costs of delivering services in rural areas.

County and rural authorities face unavoidable additional costs when delivering public services across large and geographically dispersed areas. Factors such as longer travel distances, lower population density, limited economies of scale, and higher transport and workforce costs all increase the cost of providing services compared to more urban areas. The decision to remove Remoteness from the ACA in every formulae (except adult social care) in the Fair Funding Review allocations meant that many county and rural councils received funding allocations that do not accurately reflect the true cost of delivering services, despite often serving larger geographic areas and older populations. Pixel analysis for CCN estimates that the removal of remoteness resulted in a reduction in funding over £300m for our councils.[7] As demand for services continues to rise, the failure to recognise rural delivery costs is contributing to widening funding gaps and increasing financial pressure on councils.

*Further detail in section 2.

Reinstating the remoteness indicator across all funding formulae would help ensure that funding is distributed more fairly and transparently, based on the actual costs of service delivery. It would restore confidence that the funding system reflects objective evidence and recognises the different challenges faced by local authorities in different parts of the country. This is particularly important given the government's commitment to ensuring growth and opportunity are shared across all areas, including rural and county communities.

Deliver a transparent, evidence based and rapid review of the programme of local government reorganisation, including decisions, implementation timescales and funding arrangements.

Since the reorganisation programme was announced, the CCN has been clear that it would support reorganisation in areas that wanted to pursue it, where it generated significant savings, protected local services, preserved local identity and provided a strong impetus for economic growth and devolution. The network strongly supported the statutory criteria which was set out by ministers that have recently been reappointed.

However, CCN has consistently raised concerns from our member councils over the reorganisation decisions announced in March and July.[8] This centred on how most of these decisions dramatically departed from the government criteria, would lead to unprecedented levels of complex disaggregation, impose substantial transition and implementation costs without delivering long-term benefits and presented significant risks to financial sustainability of many of the proposed unitary councils.

In light of this, CCN explicitly called for the new government to take ownership of the programme and conduct a full review, including decisions where our members have significant concerns, implementation timescales and funding arrangements to ensure that reform delivers financially viable councils capable of succeeding over the long term and providing the bedrock for devolution.[9]

Following our concerted advocacy, CCN welcome the government listening to our calls and announcing a pause and review of the programme. Where reorganisation is desired, CCN has maintained that it should only proceed only where there is a robust evidence base, a legally compliant process, and a clear case that reforms will improve outcomes for residents and financial resilience of local government.

With the government clearly listening to our concerns, we now stand ready to work with ministers. The government should use the review to establish a more sustainable approach to reorganisation, including:

- Reaffirm the existing statutory criteria for reorganisation and ensure they are applied consistently and transparently across all decisions. The review should seek to realign the programme with those criteria rather than revise them. This includes the minimum population threshold of 500,000, avoiding unnecessary and disruptive disaggregation and boundary change, and ensuring financial viability.
- Undertake a transparent, evidence-based reassessment of the decisions and the ministerial advice underpinning these, ensuring the process is legally robust and compliant. Any reassessment should focus on existing proposals and not seek to invite alternatives that are not in line with the existing criteria.
- Ensure CCN analysis and representations on financial savings, disaggregation costs, unit costs in people-based services, and funding disaggregation as result of boundary change are fully incorporated into the evidence-base informing ministerial advice and decisions.
- Review implementation timescales and phasing so it is reflective of the scale and complexity of change, concurrent reforms, and the capacity of MHCLG and wider sector.
- Fully fund transition and implementation costs so resources are not diverted away from frontline services.

CCN recognise the uncertainty this has created for councils and their staff. The review should be conducted as quickly as possible and feed into the forthcoming Devolution Whitepaper, while ensuring maximum transparency and engagement with local areas. Where our members support the implementation of an existing decision or an existing alternative proposal, and they are in line with the criteria, the government should seek to explore how these decisions can be moved forward more quickly to provide certainty.

2 Ambitious county devolution & public sector reform

The challenge

The government's commitment to growth in every postcode cannot be achieved without fully utilising the economic potential of county areas. Counties contribute significantly to national output, employment, innovation, manufacturing, energy production and logistics, yet lack the freedoms and investment available to metropolitan areas.

If the government is to succeed in its top priority, it needs to recognise the potential of polycentric and rural economies to contribute to UK PLC.

Government policy has always been too urban focused and county areas continue to have fewer economic powers than metropolitan areas, while 22 county and unitary councils, covering 17m residents, have yet to be offered a devolution settlement.

The case for investment & reform

- County areas are central to national growth, accounting for 47% of England's population (27 million people), 39% of economic output (£832bn GVA), 12 million jobs, and 47.5% of England's businesses.[10]
- County economies are varied and distinct from metropolitan areas, comprising polycentric networks of towns, rural communities and coastal areas, with highly self-contained labour markets that make them natural geographies for strategic devolution settlements.
- Despite their scale, county areas have experienced slower growth than the national average over the last decade. Forthcoming research by Grant Thornton will show that had the 39 areas represented by CCN simply matched England's growth rate, they would now be generating an additional £19bn in economic output every year.[11]
- Infrastructure is the biggest constraint on county productivity. Evidence shows that transport connectivity, digital infrastructure and access to employment centres have a stronger relationship with productivity in county areas than sectoral composition alone.
- County areas have England's strongest labour markets, with the highest employment rates and lowest inactivity levels, but face specific challenges around adult skills, graduate retention, further education participation and opportunities for disadvantaged young people.
- The fiscal case for devolution is strong: county areas generate 43% of England's tax revenues and 57% of all tax raised outside London, yet receive only 39% of place-based public spending, demonstrating the need for greater fiscal devolution and long-term integrated growth settlements.[12]

Budget Asks

Drive growth in every postcode through the extension of devolved powers and funding to Strategic Authorities and councils, including faster progress towards mayoral status and a flexible approach to governance and geographies.

The government's recent announcements on Rewiring the State have the potential to initiate a step-change in devolution across England. CCN welcomes the ambitious commitment for the establishment of strategic authorities everywhere by April 2028. But to deliver this, the government will need to move fast, be flexible and prioritise devolution in the 22 CCN members who currently are without a settlement.

In order to avoid the creation of a country of urban 'haves' and rural and county 'have nots', CCN and its members are therefore looking for a devolution settlement that will ensure that substantive powers are accessible to all areas.This means establishing parity for county areas with mayoral combined authorities, including powers over transport, skills, and investment funding.

For our members who have or will pursue a mayoral model, they should receive 'established' mayoral status after six months rather than 18 months at present: enabling them to deliver significant growth quicker.

For the county areas where – as the government recognises – a mayor is unsuitable, this should not be a barrier toaccessto the highest levels of devolved powers and funding should not be limited to just mayors only. The government should also ensure that devolution geographies are agreed locally, rather than imposed nationally, with no council area excluded from a devolution geography where there is a compelling local case.

Recognise the unique needs and potential of county economies and ensure that the forthcoming Devolution White Paper reflects this.

County economies are different from cities – and they are different from each other. They are not smaller versions of city economies, subject to the same challenges and opportunities. They are structurally unique economic systems, and are dispersed, polycentric (and often coastal) and self-contained.

But they contain major labour markets, key transport corridors, globally competitive business clusters, and much of England's land, natural capital and nationally significant infrastructure. As such, if we want to deliver growth and address some of the UK's underlying economic challenges then enabling and supporting these places is critical.

The forthcoming Devolution White Paper offers the opportunity to do just that. For economies in county areas, a lack of infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure, is a key barrier to growth, and there are higher delivery costs due to sparsity of population and rurality generally. Whereas the foundation sector (health, care, retail, hospitality) can be better supported through targeted skills investment to develop the labour market for that sector to thrive.

A forthcoming CCN-commissioned report on facilitating growth outside of urban areas will explore these issues in more detail and set out recommendations to Government – to ensure that 'growth in every postcode' become a reality rather than a slogan.

Decentralise a proportion of centrally-raised tax revenues to give local leaders the financial firepower to invest in growth, create jobs and support public services.

The commitments within Rewiring the State to pursue faster and more ambitious fiscal devolution is a potentially momentous first step in genuinely decentralising funding from Westminster. Alongside the proposed introduction of a visitor levy, the forthcoming fiscal devolution roadmap offers the opportunity to allow areas to retain a proportion of income tax, stamp duty and the new growth and skills levy.

CCN's research with Grant Thornton on fiscal devolution, published in July 2025, explored how devolution of these revenue streams could work and how much locally raised income this could generate to drive local economic growth. While we are encouraged that the government has listened to our calls within this report to be ambitious, the roadmap towards fiscal devolution must ensure that county areas receive a fair deal, and councils - not just mayors - retain and spend locally generated revenues.*

*Further detail in section 1.

Modelling for CCN suggests that devolving housing, income and overnight levy taxes to England's county areas could generate more than £4bn a year to invest in local services and supercharge economic growth.[13] Therefore, ensuring equality of access to these powers across England is crucial. The government must also ensure flexibility and local discretion to areas to decide whether to introduce new revenue streams such as the overnight visitor levy, alongside how local tax revenue is invested - with an equal role for councils working in collaboration with Strategic Authorities.

Moreover, although all counties would benefit from fiscal devolution, our research clearly showed that some areas are able to raise more than others. Therefore, whilst introducing multiple fiscal devolution measures can smooth disparities, there will still be the need for central government to establish appropriate and fair equalisation measures while retaining a strong growth incentive.

Put councils in the driving seat of public service reform and rewiring the state, ensuring a clear delineation of responsibilities between strategic authorities and constituent councils.

The wider commitments within Rewiring the State to drive forward locally-led public service reform by reforming the way the Whitehall operates, integrating public services, and aligning public sector boundaries around Strategic Authorities are welcome.

However, successful public service reform will depend on ensuring that councils remain at the heart of local service delivery and that devolution enhances, not diminishes, their role.

While Strategic Authorities have a vital function in setting economic, transport and strategic priorities, constituent councils are best placed to lead the delivery and integration of frontline services, given their statutory responsibilities, democratic accountability and deep understanding of local communities.

The forthcoming Devolution White Paper and fiscal devolution reforms should therefore establish a clear delineation of responsibilities between Strategic Authorities and councils, ensuring new governance arrangements strengthen rather than duplicate local leadership - preventing the recreation of two-tier local government. This should include:

- Recognising councils as the lead local partners for neighbourhood public service reform, prevention and service integration.
- Avoiding the transfer of existing council functions to Strategic Authorities unless there is a clear evidence-based case for doing so.
- Providing councils with direct access to reform and integration funding, rather than channelling resources solely through mayoral institutions and Strategic Authorities.

3 Reforming adult social care

The challenge

Adult social care remains the single greatest pressure facing county authorities. Rising demand driven by demographic change, increasing complexity of need, workforce shortages and provider market pressures continues to outstrip available funding. Without reform, growing expenditure on care will continue to crowd out investment in prevention and wider local services.

However, county and rural areas face unique challenges in reforming services. They have older and more dispersed populations, fragmented care markets, and higher costs of care for both working age and older adult care. Rurality and sparsity mean workforce recruitment and retention are even tougher challenges than in other areas.

Reorganisation is also diverting capacity from existing transformation work, let alone largescale reforms, and will create new pressures and costs as a result of disaggregating services.

The case for investment & reform

- In 2024/25, new clients made 2 million requests for adult social care support to the 153 councils in England that hold adult social services responsibilities. Half of these requests (49%) were made to CCN's 39 member councils. [14]
- Previous research for CCN by Newton in July 2024 showed the total minimum cumulative cost of the previous government policy to introduce charging reforms was £18.3bn, with CCN member councils accounting for 63% of these costs. [15]
- Nationally, council costs of delivering adult social care services will rise £13.3bn between 2025/26 and 2030/31. Over this period, PwC modelling shows CCN member councils will witness the largest increase in spending pressures, with the increase in costs totalling £6.3bn between 2025/26 and 2030/31.[16]
- Support for working age and lifelong disabled adults now accounts for two-thirds of councils' adult social care commissioned spend. Spending for these individuals could top £17bn by 2030 – a 50% increase since 2024. [17]
- Analysis for CCN shows the £500m funding allocation towards Fair Pay Agreements (FPA) would finance an increase of about 3% in pay for low-paid social care staff employed in delivering adult social care services funded by local authorities. At a 3% increase, this would equate to £237m of a £496m total cost falling on CCN members. A 5% pay uplift would lead to a cost impact on local authorities of £861m in 2027/28, of which £410m will fall on CCN members.[18]
- However, further LaingBuisson analysis for CCN shows that if the costs were modelled to consider all funding sources (including NHS and private pay), the overall cost impact would be £853m by 2028/29 at a 3% pay lift and £1.5bn at 5%. The overall cost impact of an FPA across all funding sources is estimated at 65% higher than costs associated with councils with adult social services responsibilities. [19]

Work with councils to model funding options for large-scale reform, and to understand and account for the impacts on county and rural areas to deliver practicable and sustainable reform.

CCN welcomed the Prime Minister's decision to bring forward the timetable for the Casey Commission. CCN have had positive engagement with the Commission and will continue to support their work over the next 12 months. The Big Conversation on Care is a constructive approach to developing proposals and our network will not presuppose its outcome.

However, in considering the options for reform and the government's response, county and rural areas face unique challenges. They have older and more dispersed populations, fragmented care markets, and higher costs of care for both working age and older adult care. Importantly, local government need practicable and sustainable adult social care reform that keeps services locally delivered by councils, democratically accountable, and focused on prevention.

Inevitably there has been a tendency during numerous reform attempts to focus on models of funding, including the previous government's plans to introduce charging reform through the introduction of a cap on care and extended means test. Despite concerted efforts to implement the changes and supporting the broad principles of these reforms, CCN research with Newton demonstrated that they were ultimately significantly underfunded and posed a number of substantial operational challenges and implementation risks, particularly for county and rural areas where there are significantly higher levels of self-funders.

Given the unique implications of reform for county and rural areas, and building on previous research and modelling on social care reform, CCN and our members stand ready to work with the Commission and HM Treasury to understand the fiscal and distributional implications of different models of large-scale adult social care reform. Ultimately, the sector all want to achieve practicable and sustainable adult social care reform, but it must work for every postcode.

HM Treasury will want to test a range of adult social care entitlement, delivery, and funding scenarios. Our member councils hold a wealth of data, expertise, and institutional knowledge, including around demographics, levels of need, current expenditure, care markets, provider costs, self-funders, and local tax bases. The network can convene collaboration between HM Treasury and councils in county and rural areas to support the assessment of affordability, practicability, and variation across areas.

Sufficiently fund councils to meet residents' needs for care, the higher costs of reorganisation on care services, and fully fund Fair Pay Agreements while we await the recommendations of the Casey Commission.

As outlined in Section 1, councils face a number of significant in-year funding pressures in adult social care linked to higher than anticipated demand and inflationary pressures. Moreover, despite strong support for their introduction, concerns remain over the financial impact of Fair Pay Agreements.

LaingBuisson analysis for CCN shows the £500 million funding envelope for the first FPA in 2028/29 would finance an increase of about 3% in pay for low-paid social care staff employed in delivering adult social care services funded by local authorities.[20] This aligned with the modelling in the Government's Fair pay agreement consultation impact assessment.[21]

However, if the costs are modelled to consider all funding sources, including NHS and self-funded care, then a 3% pay uplift would result in an overall cost impact of £853m. The overall cost impact of an FPA across all funding sources is estimated at 65% higher than costs associated with councils with adult social services responsibilities.[22]

County councils, and new unitary councils, also face a number of additional financial pressures and risks due to the costs associated with the disaggregation of adult social services.

Previous analysis by CCN showed the creation of 58 unitary councils across the remaining two-tier areas could create £3.7bn of disaggregation costs over five years and a recurring annual cost of half a billion.[23] These costs are significantly higher than anticipated when the government set out the potential savings that were achievable through reorganisation within the Devolution White Paper.

While we await the outcome of the review on the reorganisation programme and proposals for comprehensive reform of the system, councils must be sufficiently funded to meet residents' needs for care and support in the meantime through a further injection of funding. This includes funding the additional costs of disaggregation if and where this takes place following the review of reorganisation decisions.

Moreover, increased costs from FPAs to, for example, people self-funding their care and NHS continuing healthcare packages, will ultimately increase demand and costs for councils. This must be fully accounted for and funded.

Ensure Better Care Fund reforms enable councils to continue leading the 'left shift', and invest in programmes that extend Neighbourhood Health beyond urban-centric models.

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is one of the biggest funding streams for preventative services. CCN recognise the coming financial year will likely be a transitional one for the BCF, against a backdrop of longer-term reforms to the fund.

Local care and health systems are expected to align BCF spending plans with neighbourhood health priorities, yet national BCF metrics continue to prioritise patient flow through hospitals. Investment in the 'left shift' must not be diminished by the continued focus on hospital-discharge targets, with previous research by Newton for CCN showing investment in community-based preventative social care services would result in both better outcomes, and significantly reduced costs.[24]

Councils, rather than ICBs, are the leaders in neighbourhood health planning and delivery. Councils have long-been the local experts in preventative community-based care and health creation. Alongside their public health function, they hold statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 to ensure the provision of services and facilities that prevent, reduce and delay need.

There are strong arguments for strengthening local government's ownership of the Better Care Fund. Councils in county and rural areas have embraced the neighbourhood health agenda, but they must be better enabled to make the most of its opportunities.

The Neighbourhood Health Centres programme and its £50m investment is an urban-centric model of delivery. Building-based facilities are neither desirable nor feasible within the majority of CCN members' neighbourhoods. The model assumes sizeable population catchments with high natural footfall, the ability to co-locate multidisciplinary teams, and good public transport and road access.

CCN urges the Government to make a parallel £50m investment into delivering neighbourhood health in county and rural areas through mobile units, hub and spoke models, and digital infrastructure.

4 Improving outcomes in SEND & children's services

The challenge

The SEND system faces growing financial and operational pressures. Demand for Education, Health and Care Plans continues to rise while councils experience growing high-needs deficits and escalating specialist placement costs. The SEND system is leading to poor outcomes for children, while councils also face unsustainable SEND home to school transport costs.

At the same time, children's social care faces increasing complexity and demand. County authorities continue to witness escalating costs at a time when funding reforms have reduced their share of resources, while reorganisation presents significant additional costs and workforce pressures in disaggregating county services.

Recent reforms in SEND and children's services have been strongly welcomed, but county and rural areas face a number of unique challenges and the change in administration creates uncertainty over implementation.

The case for investment & reform

- The number of children with ECHPs has risen to an all-time high of 718,800 this year. Previous CCN projections estimated ECHPs were on course to reach almost 840,000 by the end of this Parliament.[25] However, given evidence of a surge in demand since the government announced its reforms, it is now likely these numbers will be exceeded.[26]
- This has had a major impact on local government finances. In 2015, councils' high-needs block spending was £4bn, but had reached £9.9bn by 2024/25, with our previous projections suggesting expenditure will rise to £16.8bn by 2028/29.[27]
- This year the government has committed to writing off 90% of historic deficits to March 2026. However, data* from the Society of County Treasurers (SCT) shows that despite this support, rapidly rising demand and historic underfunding mean that deficits are growing at an ever faster rate and will fully reaccumulate over the next two years. For CCN councils, deficits are set to reach £5.4bn by March 2028.
- Nationally, council costs of delivering children's services will rise £11bn between 2025/26 and 2030/31. Over this period, PwC modelling, shows CCN member councils will witness the largest increase in spending pressures, with the increase in costs totalling £4.3bn between 2025/26 and 2030/31.[28]
- Councils transported an estimated 206,000 children and young people with SEND to school last year – a record high. If current trends continue, this will rise to 311,000 by 2030/31. As a result, SEND school transport costs are projected to rise from the £2bn that councils spent last year to £3.4bn by 2030/31, with half these costs in county and rural areas.[29]

*preliminary survey data returns, full data including national estimates to be released later this Autumn.

Confirm the government's commitment to the SEND reform plan, provide clarity on future high-needs deficit support, and consult on future funding arrangements and resource distribution to ensure greater fairness for county and rural areas.

CCN has welcomed the Government's proposed SEND reform plan published in February, and believes this provides a roadmap towards rebalancing the SEND system to deliver better outcomes for children and young people, as well as affordability. Alongside this, CCN has strongly welcomed the government's commitment to alleviated 90% of accumulated deficits in the High Needs Block up to March 2026.

CCN research has shown that despite investing over £30bn more over the last decade neither educational outcomes nor family satisfaction with the system have improved,[30] with preliminary SCT survey data returns showing deficits for our member councils will fully reaccumulate over the next two years and reach £5.4bn by March 2028.

It is vital the new administration confirms its commitment to the reform plan in order to help stabilise the system. Local government must also have clarity as soon as possible on the government plans for further deficit write-off up to March 2028. This includes ensuring at a minimum that the government repeat its 90% support and provide additional assistance to councils where this is insufficient to mitigate the risk of insolvency from remaining deficits on 1st April 2028. Urgency on this is particularly important for financial planning and deficit allocation between new unitary authorities created under reorganisation.

Finally, the government must maintain its commitment to centrally fund all high-needs expenditure from 2028 and launch its consultation on future funding of the High Needs Block and its distribution formula as soon as possible. The high-needs funding formuala unfairly penalises county and rural councils. Previous analysis by the SCT demonstrates that, if all authorities had been funded at the national average in HNB per-pupil funding, 2025-26 in-year High Needs deficits in SCT areas would have been approximately 70% smaller.

Clarity on funding arrangements would allow schools and councils to have a full understanding for how to budget for their new roles in the reformed SEND system, while crucially ensuring a fairer distribution of funding to councils in county and rural areas.

Recognise the growing pressures created in the SEND Home to School system, providing additional financial support and reforms to reduce long-term costs.

Spending on SEND home to school transport has risen by more than 200% since 2015/16, reaching nearly £2bn in 2024/25 and with a CCN report in February 2026 projecting this to hit £3.4bn by 2030/31.[31]

Yet despite CCN research showing this growth being driven almost entirely by the costs of SEND Home to School Transport (HTST), the recent SEND reform plan does not contain any specific reference for how these costs will be alleviated in the short- to medium-term.

Whilst CCN believes SEND reforms should reduce reliance on distant special school placements in the long-term it also states it does not expect EHCPs to return to "present levels" until the mid 2030s meaning these pressures are likely to present for some time to come.

The Government committed at last year's budget to assume the full costs of SEND funding from March 2028, but unless this includes SEND HTST these spending pressures are unlikely to abate with little means for local authorities to address this.

Given the financial challenge posed by SEND transport, it is therefore vital that the government now set out how SEND HTST will be funded as part of its wider reform plans, including extending the commitment for central government to assume the full cost of delivering these services while keeping services locally delivered through councils.

Moreover, government should consider wider reforms to home to school transport services, including:

- Tightening the scope and purpose of EHCPs so that schooling a long distance from home focuses on those with the most complex needs.
- Ensuring the SEND Tribunal system does not make placement decisions without considering the additional impact of transport costs.
- Putting in place clearer national guidance that enables councils to reform HTST locally and operate services on a more sustainable footing.
- Consider a national means-testing policy so that families above a specified income threshold are required to make a financial contribution to home to school transport.

Continue to drive forward reforms to children's social care, including investment in family help and prevention through best start in life, families first and regional care cooperatives, while recognising the unique challenges facing county and rural areas.

Children's services spending now represents the fastest growing pressure on council budgets, and CCN projects that its councils will be spending £4.3bn more on children's services by 2030/31 than they do today, driven partly by a dysfunctional care placement market.[32]

In order to tackle these rising costs, CCN has supported many of the reforms to children's social care which have been introduced by successive governments. These include measures to address the excessive fees in the market for care placements, as well as rebalancing the present system towards earlier intervention through family support.

There are signs that these are beginning to turn the tide with the numbers of children in care dipping slightly after hitting historic levels earlier in the decade. It is vital that councils receive the necessary resources and powers to ensure the reforms are a success.

However, in delivering reform, county and rural unitary councils are placed at a significant funding disadvantage. Changes to the distribution of funding have resulted in significant pressure for CCN member councils, with our members on average only receiving one third of the funding per head to deliver children's services that metropolitan authorities in the north and midlands of England receive - just £345 compared to £1,069 - forcing them to divert more and more funding to crisis care rather than prevention.[33]

Moreover, as in adult social care, county councils, and new unitary councils, also face a number of additional financial pressures and risks due to the costs associated with the disaggregation of children's social services and SEND.

Children in all parts of the country deserve the same support and opportunity, and resourcing must be addressed by the Chancellor in the forthcoming budget to recognise the complexity of rising demand and reforms.

As outlined in section 1, the government should provide a further injection of funding to meet specific funding pressures in children's social care budgets, and ensure councils are appropriately resourced to cope whilst new measures to address market dysfunction in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act are implemented. This includes funding the additional costs of disaggregation if and when this takes place following the review of reorganisation decisions.

At the same time there must continue to be effective policy focus on the opportunities and challenges of delivering government reforms such as best start in life, families first and regional care cooperatives in county and rural areas. These initiatives can help prevent children coming into care in the first place to both deliver better outcomes for our most vulnerable young people as well as reducing pressure on budgets over time, but government must work with CCN members to ensure the effective role out at a time of competing pressures in county and rural areas.

5 Building sustainable communities

The challenge

County and rural areas are expected to deliver a significant share of England's future housing growth, yet infrastructure investment is not keeping pace. Councils are being asked to deliver significant new development without the transport, roads, schools and healthcare infrastructure needed to create sustainable communities and maintain public confidence.

At the same time, housing affordability remains a major challenge, with demand for affordable homes continuing to outstrip supply. Limited planning capacity and funding constraints are making it harder for councils to bring forward the homes communities need and support economic growth.

These pressures are contributing to rising homelessness and increasing reliance on temporary accommodation. As more households struggle to access affordable housing, councils are spending more on crisis support, placing further strain on local government finances and diverting resources away from prevention and other frontline services.

The case for investment & reform

- CCN's unitary councils are currently delivering homes at 125% of their Housing Delivery Test targets - higher than any other part of local government. Yet without sustained investment in infrastructure, affordable housing and local planning capacity, many areas are unlikely to achieve the significantly higher housing targets now expected of them.
- 58% of CCN member councils describe the pressure on their existing infrastructure as 'excessive, and 73% describe their infrastructure funding gap as 'severe'. [34]
- The number of households in temporary accommodation in county and rural areas is also at an all-time high. In March 2026 there were 22,230 households in temporary accommodation, which is an increase of almost 80% over the last six years.[35]
- Councils in county areas spent £124m on temporary accommodation in 2019/20 but six years later those councils were spending £373m on temporary accommodation in 2024/25. This trebling of spend is a faster rate than anywhere else in England.[36]
- Almost one in five of these households are based in expensive 'nightly paid' private accommodation in county areas. This figure has grown from 17% in 2020, illustrating the increasing paucity of options for county and rural councils.[37]
- Between 2018 and 2024, bus services in county areas reduced by almost a fifth. At the same time urban areas received almost double the funding compared to county areas.[38]
- A forthcoming report on the state of county roads finds that CCN member authorities currently deal with 1.2 million potholes per year, and this will rise to 1.8 million over the next 10 years.[39]

Budget Asks

Provide a long-term, county-proof homelessness settlement that tackles rising rural homelessness, fully funds temporary accommodation pressures and ensures county areas benefit fairly from investment in affordable housing.

The government has rightly placed ending homelessness and rough sleeping at the heart of its domestic agenda since taking office, including the commitment to end rough sleeping with £340m of new funding, additional homelessness prevention funding, and the first £10bn tranche of the Social and Affordable Homes Programme.

CCN strongly supports these ambitions. Our recent analysis demonstrated that homelessness is no longer concentrated solely in England's major cities.[40] Rising private rents, acute shortages of affordable housing, and growing cost-of-living pressures mean county and rural areas are experiencing some of the fastest increases in homelessness and temporary accommodation anywhere in the country.

While the recent expansion of homelessness funding is welcome, CCN remains concerned that investment in affordable housing and homelessness programmes continues to be disproportionately focused on major urban areas, despite rapidly growing demand in counties and rural communities. The first tranche of the Social and Affordable Homes Programme saw the vast majority of funding directed towards cities, despite county areas accounting for growing levels of homelessness and temporary accommodation.

Government should therefore establish a multi-year homelessness and temporary accommodation settlement that provides certainty for councils, supports early intervention, and recognises the growing pressures facing councils in county and rural areas, including;

- Reforming temporary accommodation subsidy rates, which remain linked to Local Housing Allowance levels set in 2011, leaving councils to absorb growing funding shortfalls.
- Ensuring future allocations from the Social and Affordable Homes Programme includes a fair share for county and rural areas, reflecting rising housing need and homelessness.
- Supporting the delivery of affordable and social housing in rural and market town communities, where housing affordability pressures are often most acute and alternative accommodation options are limited.

Provide a period of stability following the introduction of the revised National Planning Policy Framework and review its impact on county and rural areas, ensuring housing growth is matched by adequate infrastructure investment, planning capacity and affordable housing provision.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in August 2026, represents one of the most significant changes to the planning system in recent years. While CCN supports the Government's ambition to boost housing delivery and economic growth, the reforms place greater emphasis on housing targets without corresponding investment in the infrastructure, public services and local capacity needed to support sustainable development.

This is particularly challenging for county and rural areas, where housing requirements have increased significantly and there is a greater risk of growth outpacing the transport, education, healthcare and utility infrastructure communities rely upon.

While county areas are committed to growth, there are concerns that the reforms could weaken the effectiveness of the plan-led system, increase the prospect of speculative development, and undermine public confidence in the planning process.

Recognising that the revised NPPF is now in force, Government should engage with CCN member authorities to review its impact on county and rural areas, ensuring housing growth is supported by adequate infrastructure investment, planning capacity and affordable housing provision.

Establish a long-term County Infrastructure Fund and reform developer contributions to ensure growth areas receive sufficient funding to deliver new infrastructure.

County and rural areas are expected to accommodate a significant share of England's housing growth, yet investment in the infrastructure and roads network needed to support new development is often insufficient or delayed. Existing infrastructure, such as roads and bridges are under increasing pressure for investment - with a forthcoming CCN report finding that CCN authorities currently repair around 1.2 million potholes each year, with this expected to rise to 1.8 million annually over the next decade.[41]

Councils are under increasing pressure to deliver new homes without the roads, public transport, schools, healthcare facilities and utilities required to create sustainable communities. Where new infrastructure and road improvements fail to keep pace with growth, pressure on local services increases and public confidence in new development can be undermined.

To meet these unique pressures, the government should establish a long-term County Infrastructure Fund and reform developer contributions to ensure infrastructure investment keeps pace with housing growth. Existing funding mechanisms are often unable to meet the full costs of development, particularly in areas experiencing significant growth.

Providing councils with greater certainty over infrastructure funding would support long-term planning, particularly through Spatial Development Strategies, helping to unlock housing delivery, and ensure new homes are accompanied by the infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth and thriving communities.

Deliver a County Bus Strategy and long-term funding settlement to reverse the decline in rural bus services and improve connectivity for residents and businesses.

CCN welcomes the government's recent decision to introduce a £2 bus fare cap throughout 2027, which will improve affordability for passengers and support access to employment, education and public services. Our network has also previously welcomed reforms to funding arrangements, alongside the devolution of transport powers and new models of delivery.

However, lower fares and devolved powers more suited to urban metropolitan cities alone will not address the fundamental challenge facing county and rural communities: the continued loss of bus routes and patchy service provision.

Government should therefore build on recent reforms by establishing a dedicated County Bus Strategy, alongside a long-term funding settlement that recognises the higher costs of operating services across large and rural geographies.

Funding should prioritise areas experiencing service decline, support socially necessary routes, and give councils the flexibility to develop innovative rural transport solutions, recognising that models such as franchasing are not necessary viable in these areas.

Footnotes

1. **CCN. A Five Point Plan for National Renewal (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/a-five-point-plan-for-national-renewal

2. **CCN. Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27: CCN consultation response (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-27-ccn-consultation-response

3. Ibid

4. Ibid

5. **CCN. Local government reorganisation - evaluating the financial impact of population thresholds (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/ccn-local-government-reorganisation---evaluating-the-financial-impact-of-population-thresholds

6. **SCT 2026/27 Budget Survey. Unpublished.**

7. **PwC analysis contained in Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27: CCN consultation response (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-27-ccn-consultation-response

8. **CCN. Joint County Council Leaders Letter (June 2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/news/ccn-letter-to-the-prime-minister-and-local-government-secretary-warning-over-reorganisation

9. **CCN. A Five Point Plan for National Renewal (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/a-five-point-plan-for-national-renewal

10. **Forthcoming Grant Thornton research.**

11. Ibid

12. **Grant Thornton. Grant Thornton: Fiscal Devolution - exploring the options in England's counties (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/grant-thornton-fiscal-devolution---exploring-the-options-in-englands-counties
13. Ibid

14. **CCN analysis of DHSC Adult Social Care Activity and Finance data 2025/26**

15. **CCN & Newton. Adult Social Care Charging Reform (2024)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/ccn-analysis---adult-social-care-charging-reform

16. **PwC analysis contained in Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27: CCN consultation response (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-27-ccn-consultation-response

17. **Newton. The Forgotten Story of Social Care (2024)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/newton-the-forgotten-story-of-social-care

18. **LaingBuisson. Modelling the impact of Fair Pay policies on the costs of adult social care (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/laingbuisson---modelling-the-impact-of-fair-pay-policies-on-the-costs-of-adult-social-care

19. Ibid

20. Ibid

21. **DHSC. Fair pay agreement process in adult social care - impact assessment (2025)** https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fair-pay-agreement-process-in-adult-social-care

22. **LaingBuisson. Modelling the impact of Fair Pay policies on the costs of adult social care (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/laingbuisson---modelling-the-impact-of-fair-pay-policies-on-the-costs-of-adult-social-care

23. **CCN. Local government reorganisation - evaluating the financial impact of population thresholds (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/ccn-local-government-reorganisation---evaluating-the-financial-impact-of-population-thresholds

24. **Newton. Finding a Way Home - how health and social care can optimise hospital flow and discharge this winter (2023)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/newton-finding-a-way-home---how-health-and-social-care-can-optimise-hospital-flow-and-discharge-this-winter

25. **CCN & Isos Partnership. Special Educational Needs in England - How we got to crisis point (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/ccn-and-isos-partnership-special-educational-needs-in-england---how-we-got-to-crisis-point

26. **The Guardian. Pupils with Send plans in England likely to double to one in 10 in rush for support** (September 2026) https://www.theguardian.com/education/2026/sep/06/schools-england-report-surge-send-applications

27. **CCN & Isos Partnership. Special Educational Needs in England - How we got to crisis point (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/ccn-and-isos-partnership-special-educational-needs-in-england---how-we-got-to-crisis-point

28. **PwC analysis contained in Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27: CCN consultation response (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-27-ccn-consultation-response

29. **CCN. Home to School Transport: How SEND Reform Can Make Services More Sustainable (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/home-to-school-transport-how-send-reform-can-make-services-more-sustainable

30. **CCN & Isos Partnership. Special Educational Needs in England - How we got to crisis point (2025)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/ccn-and-isos-partnership-special-educational-needs-in-england---how-we-got-to-crisis-point

31. **CCN. Home to School Transport: How SEND Reform Can Make Services More Sustainable (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/home-to-school-transport-how-send-reform-can-make-services-more-sustainable

32. **PwC analysis contained in Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27: CCN consultation response (2026)** https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-27-ccn-consultation-response

33. **Pixel Financial Management and CCN Briefing: Analysis of Per Head Funding.** Unpublished.

34. **CCN. The Future of Strategic Planning in England**
https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/publications/the-future-of-strategic-planning-in-england

35. **CCN. Children housed in temporary accommodation soar by over 70% in county areas as councils warn rural homelessness is becoming a 'deepening crisis' (2026)**
https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/news/children-housed-in-temporary-accommodation-soar-by-over-70-in-county-areas-as-councils-warn-rural-homelessness-is-becoming-a-deepening-crisis

36. Ibid

37. Ibid

38. CCN. One in five rural bus routes have vanished despite pledges of a 'bus revolution' (2025)
https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/news/one-in-five-rural-bus-routes-have-vanished-despite-pledges-of-a-bus-revolution

39. **Forthcoming WSP analysis for CCN.**

40. **CCN. Children housed in temporary accommodation soar by over 70% in county areas as councils warn rural homelessness is becoming a 'deepening crisis' (2026)**
https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/news/children-housed-in-temporary-accommodation-soar-by-over-70-in-county-areas-as-councils-warn-rural-homelessness-is-becoming-a-deepening-crisis

41. **Forthcoming WSP analysis for CCN.**

CCN

THE VOICE OF COUNTIES

CCN is the voice of England's counties. Representing the local authorities in county areas, the network is a cross-party organisation which develops policy, commissions research, and presents evidence-based solutions to issues on behalf of the largest grouping of councils in England.

In total, the 21 county councils and 18 unitary councils that make up the CCN represent 27 million residents, account for 39% of England's GVA, and deliver high-quality services that matter the most to local communities.

To discuss this document or CCN in more detail, please contact:

James Maker
Director of Policy and Communications

james.maker2@local.gov.uk

For press enquiries

Ian Burbidge
Senior Media & Communications Officer

ian.burbidge@local.gov.uk

@CCNOffice

County Councils Network

County Councils Network