CCN

COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK

Road to Recovery from Covid-19: How counties are leading efforts to respond and rebuild

January 2021

Introduction

Every part of the public sector has stepped up to the national effort during the Coronavirus pandemic: from the health service, to education, to law enforcement. Amongst these, councils have played a pivotal part and it is their role which is arguably the most varied: impacting on each of our lives in many different ways.

In the first wave of the pandemic, county and unitary authorities transformed how they worked overnight, re-shaping and adapting services, while redeploying staff en-masse at short notice. They immediately began helping the most vulnerable through the shielding programme alongside protecting the NHS and providing care homes with support.

The onset of a second wave has brought new challenges, not least in a dramatic increase in infections over a shorter period of time in counties. This time councils' immediate role has changed but remains as, if not more, pivotal than the first wave.

Utilising their experience of the first lockdown, more essential frontline services continue to operate safely and securely. Most importantly, they are continuing to play a lead part in efforts to vanquish the virus, more recently through mass testing and the roll out of vaccinations. Equally, they have adapted their support to offer bespoke help to individuals and businesses that need it the most in their areas.

County and unitary authorities are also turning their attention to recovery strategies, with local areas best placed to lead on efforts to rebuild from the economic and social devastation of the virus. Our councils are looking to the future in recognition that things will not be the same and putting in plans to reshape their economies. Moreover, as leaders of place, they are considering how they help address the deep social and health inequalities created by the pandemic, and rethink the way their own organisations will operate in the future.

Building on our previous publication, *Coronavirus: How counties are stepping up to help the nation*, this latest report outlines just some of the innovative work that been undertaken by CCN member councils in going the extra mile for their communities.

Road to Recovery from Covid-19: How counties are leading efforts to respond and rebuild

Combating Covid

- Setting up local test and trace teams
- Helping set up mass vaccination centres
- Rolling out community testing in local towns

Helping individuals

- Targeted welfare support such as food & essentials
- Keeping lonely care home residents connected
- Subsidising gigabit broadband in rural areas

Community support

- Deploying coronavirus stewards
- Providing laptops for home learning
- Improving cycling and walking infrastructure

Economic recovery

- Helping to unlock major regeneration sites
- Using influence to attract emerging industries
- Developing affordable and green homes

Playing a major part in the national effort

During the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, county authorities stepped up and played an integral role in the response to the national health emergency. They helped ensure that the NHS was not overwhelmed by creating additional capacity for care and acted quickly to ensure those living and working in care homes were protected against the virus.

All the while, this unprecedented situation required our councils to adapt and re-shape their services overnight; closing offices and moving thousands of staff to remote working; and redeploying employees in closed services to other essential frontline activity.

As the infection rates subsided over the summer months, councils became integral to ensuring the nation had an effective track and trace system by developing their own local operations to support the national system. As education authorities, our member councils worked with schools to support the national priority of a safe return of pupils to the classroom for the Autumn term.

During the second wave of Coronavirus, the challenges in keeping frontline services open and supporting our schools, health and care services - while simultaneously aiding the national effort to combat the spread of Covid-19 - have been intensified by a dramatic rise in infections. Driven by a new variant of the virus, counties witnessed the total number of positive Covid-19 cases during the entire pandemic double within the space of just six weeks.

How counties are supporting the national effort...

MASS VACCINATIONS

They are supporting and assisting with the logistics and administration of the vaccination programme.

KEEPING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

More essential services are being maintained, from early years settings, to household waste and recycling centres, to road repairs.

LOCAL TEST & TRACE

They are at the vanguard in supporting local track and trace efforts and delivering mass testing of their communities to drive down infections.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

Helping schools adapt to a resumption of remote learning and enacted dedicated interventions to ensure the most disadvantaged children are able to access learning from home.

In both the second and third national lockdowns our county and unitary authorities have immediately stepped up once again, using their previous experience to keep more essential frontline services open, from early years settings to county parks, household waste and recycling centres to click and collect services at local libraries.

Most importantly, councils have continued to play a vital role in supporting the national effort. CCN member councils have delivered further support to social care settings through their infection control plans, providing additional support to care providers. They are working with health services to respond to an acute rise in hospitalisations to free up capacity and prevent services becoming overwhelmed.

One of the most disruptive national aspects of the pandemic has been to the education of our children. The necessity to close schools to bare-down on the spread of the virus has bought both short and long-term consequences, particularly for those that are already suffering from educational disadvantages. As schools were closed once again, our member councils have acted quickly to help schools adapt to a resumption of remote learning.

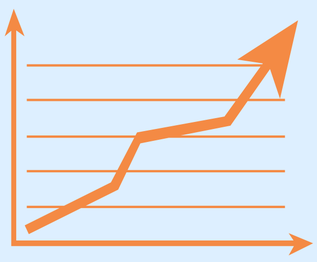
County and unitary authorities continue to be on the frontline in tackling the virus. As public health authorities, they are working with their partners to support their communities to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives through clear communication on restrictions, updates on the latest infection data, and undertaking business compliance and enforcement activity with district councils.

Using their local knowledge and public health expertise, they are at the vanguard in supporting tracing efforts and coordinating mass testing of their communities. And, as the mass vaccination programme provides a light at the end of the tunnel, they have been assisting with the logistics and administration of the vaccination programme - often at very short notice.

As we look ahead to the coming months, our case studies show that efforts in suppressing and tracking the virus, and rolling out the biggest vaccination programme in England's history, will only be at their most effective if the role of local government is maximised.

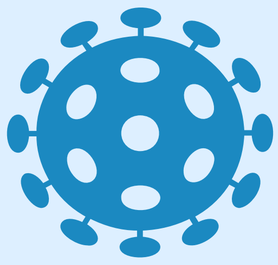
The onset of a second wave has brought new challenges, not least in a dramatic increase in infections over a shorter period of time in counties

The total number of positive cases recorded throughout the pandemic doubled between 4th December and 15th January...



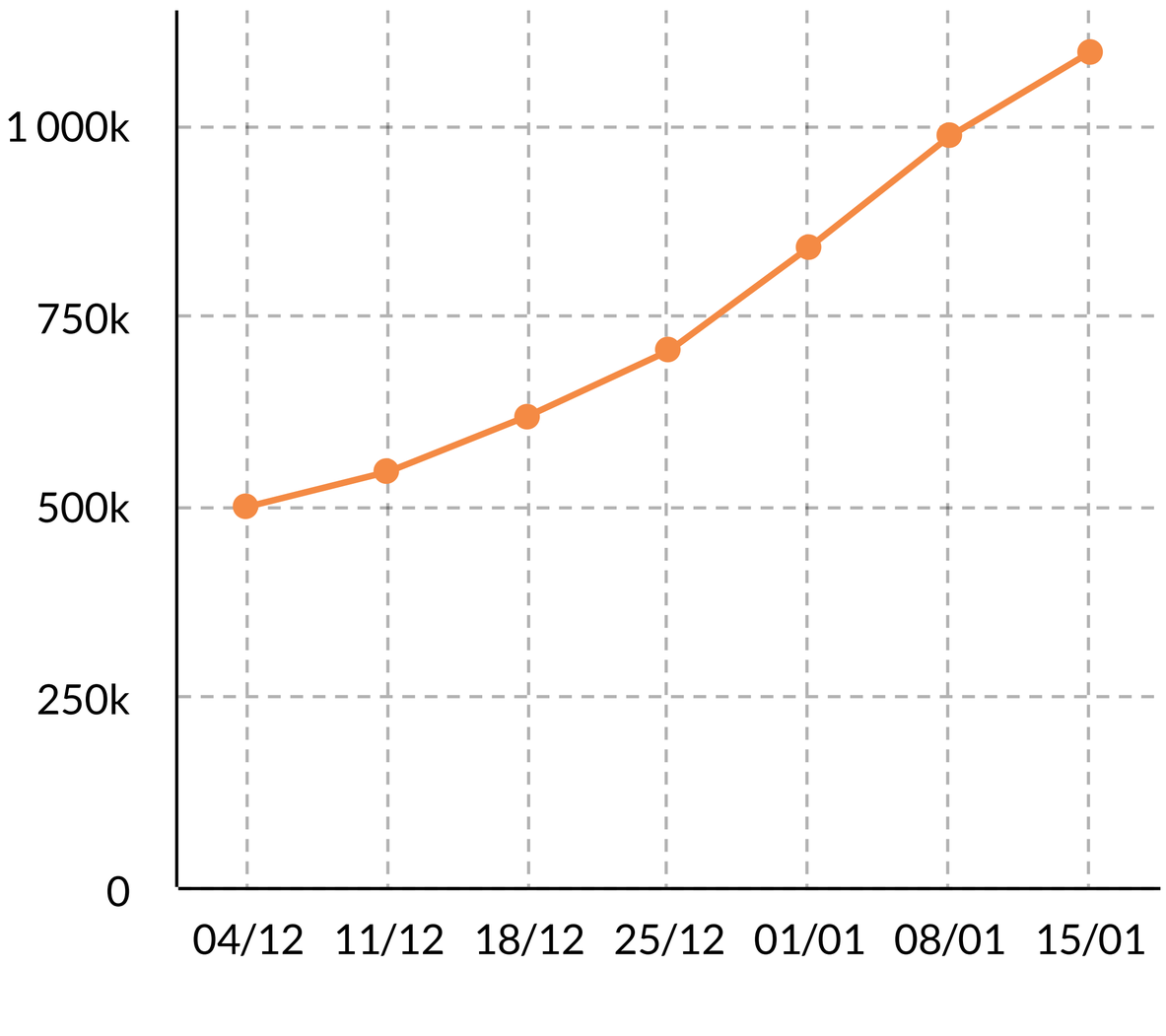
499k to 1.1m

With new weekly cases rising from 46k on the 11th December to 145k on 8th January, the average infection peaked at...

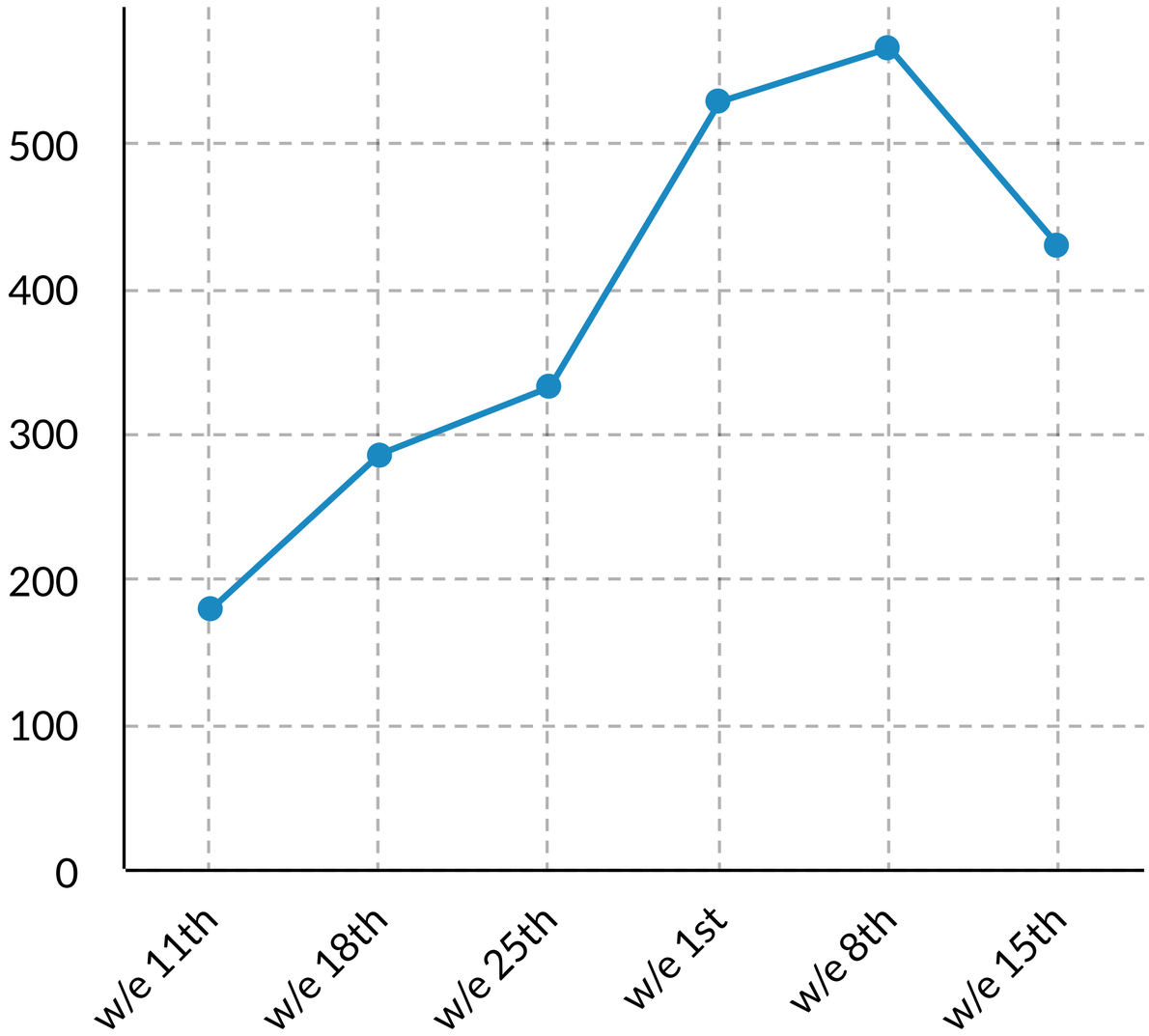


565 per 100,000

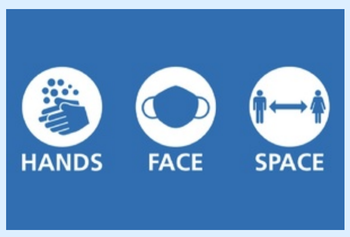
Total Positive cases



New Cases Per 100,000



The number of new cases is starting to stabilise as everyone plays their part, with new weekly cases on the 16th January down from...



145k to 110k

However cases remain too high, with the average infection rate still double what it was at the beginning of December...

428 per 100,000

Playing a major part in the national effort
Case studies

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

Hundreds volunteer to help with vaccination effort

Hundreds of staff from Somerset County Council have been re-deployed to help out with the vaccination effort after volunteering from their 'business as usual' roles at the council.

Re-deployed individuals are helping project manage the setting up of Somerset's GP vaccination hubs, and staff are also contacting eligible residents inviting them to vaccination appointments, supporting the 'test and trace' effort if a Somerset resident tests positive, running the care home vaccination programme and delivering vital food parcels and PPE.

One such story is that of Gary Frecknall, who is a highways manager at the council - but who has been responsible for setting up GP hubs in the county, working with health partners.

Read more here.

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

More than 1,400 symptomless people tested in just two days

People without symptoms in Swadlincote were the first in the country to be invited for a Coronavirus test as part of the county councils' plans for targeted community testing. The scheme is designed to break the chain of transmission by alerting public health teams to where the spread could be in local areas by testing asymptomatic people. The programme saw over 1,400 symptomless people tested within the first two days: around 1 in 30 of the town's residents.

Alongside a test, the council's staff were on hand to offer financial and other advice if people were required to self-isolate. The council opened up four further sites in January.

Read more here.

CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL

Local test and trace tracks virtually every Coronavirus case

Cumbria used its in-house expertise to launch England's first fully-functioning local test and trace programme, 10 days before the NHS' national scheme was rolled out at the end of May.

The council drafted in teams with knowledge of local contact tracing, such as its sexual health department, and worked with district councils' housing teams to set up an effective test and trace programme. This 'local knows best' approach has reaped rewards: the council's community teams track 97% of complex local cases, which are cases the national programme has been unable to track. Cumbria's local scheme has proved vastly superior in successfully tracking contacts compared to the national programme, and it has earned plaudits from The Times.

Read more here.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Do the right thing and stay local campaign

Following the announcement of the new lockdown in January, the council urged people to "do the right thing" and not travel to the county's beaches and other beauty spot. While most people are doing their bit to follow the guidance, the council warned that the county's countryside and coastal hotspots and villages were still seeing a large influx of visitors, with reports that some of their communities are finding it difficult to access local shops due to the numbers of visitors to the area.

Huge electronic signs were placed on key roads in Northumberland reminding people of the "Essential Travel Only – Stay Local" message, with more signs in production for town centres and country parks.

Read more here.

Playing a major part in the national effort
Case studies

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Helping set up one of the country's first vaccination hubs

The council worked with its local partners to play a major role in the logistics of setting up one of England's first mass vaccination centres in Stevenage.

The vaccination centre at the council owned-site at Robertson House was one of the first seven mass vaccination hubs to open up in England and is what the government says will be key in ensuring the population is vaccinated as quickly as possible in 2021.

It was a team effort: Hertfordshire County Council worked behind the scenes during December to set up the vaccination centre, alongside the NHS and local district councils.

Read more here.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Successfully tracking hundreds of cases locally

The council launched its local test and trace scheme in October, and within three months had managed to complete contact tracing for over 1,000 residents that the national scheme was unable to, who otherwise would have gone on to spread the virus across the county.

This local track and trace scheme is a joint endeavour between the county council, universities, and health organisations.

The cases that the council tracks tend to be more complex and are which the national programme has been unable to reach. Unlike the NHS scheme, the county's programme calls people using a local number, sends texts and emails to people telling them to expect a call, and visits people at home who cannot be reached by phone.

Read more here.

Playing a major part in the national effort
Case studies

LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Ensuring outbreaks are quickly contained in care homes

Lincolnshire's infection control teams have moved swiftly to address any local outbreaks in care homes to isolate them and stop them spreading further. The council has given financial support to its care homes throughout the pandemic, and was asked to design an infection control programme during the second wave.

As well as making care homes safe for staff and residents, this included a full programme of training, support with accessing coronavirus test kits and PPE, plus providing Facebook portals and digital technology to help with care.

The council's joint efforts with health partners have earned praised from private providers, with the Lincolnshire Care Association saying the support had been 'invaluable'.

Read more here.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Deploying Coronavirus stewards to educate and enforce

Central Bedfordshire has deployed 16 'Coronavirus' stewards to ensure business and individuals are compliant with national restrictions across the county.

The stewards, patrolling the councils biggest towns, will be ensuring that people are adequately distancing and wearing masks in certain places.
But their role is also educational to try and change people's behaviours: explaining to and encouraging people and promoting the national guidance. They will also be gathering intelligence and information on potential regulation breaches and will feedback to the council on possible enforcement action.

Read more here.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Providing thousands of computers for families in need

Essex County Council has secured 3,000 laptops, chromebooks, and iPads to secondary schools so they can distribute them to families in need.

The scheme was initially launched last year and rapidly expanded for January when schools were closed during the second wave, leaving some low-income households without any computers for their child to learn at home on.

The council said that it was also working with primary schools to find out how many younger children are without online access. An initial four hundred iPads are ready to meet urgent requirements, some of which have already gone out in Tendring.

Read more here.

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Making the county's schools the best-attended in the country

Schools in West Sussex are amongst the best-attended in the entire country following their re-opening in September, thanks to the efforts of the county council and school staff.

The council area was one of just two in the entire country to post average attendance of its secondary schools of over 90% during the Autumn term, with the council's public health team working with schools to make them safe working and teaching environments. The number of children with Education, Health, and Care Plans and those with an allocated worker in school were also higher than the national average in the county during the term.

Read more here.

Helping those that need it the most

The pandemic has bought with it much economic and social hardship. Behind every statistic is a real person's traumatic story. The effects of the virus has been to plunge more households and individuals into financial and emotional hardship, whilst exacerbating social deprivation, isolation, health and education inequalities.

The vital role of county and unitary authorities in delivering large-scale projects and services to protect our health and care services is understandably the most visible aspect of their response to the pandemic. But equally important is the tailored support they have provided right down to local neighbourhood and individual household to help ease the burden felt by those suffering the worst socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

Our previous publication showed how our councils had worked with their partners to protect the most vulnerable residents from the virus by shielding them in their own home. CCN member councils took on substantial extra workloads to ensure that those people receive food parcels and medicine to their doors, along with emotional support.

Since the second and third lockdowns, CCN member councils have worked with partners to bring back this support overnight for those that continue to need help with every day essentials. Our councils have also gone that extra mile for those also in care settings. For instance, providing residents in care setting with the means to speak to their friends and family during lockdown, to tackle the devastating impacts the restrictions have had on those unable to see their loved ones.

How counties are helping those most in need...

SHIELDING THE VULNERABLE

Continue to protect the most vulnerable by providing food parcels and medicines to shielded residents.

WELFARE ASSISTANCE

Delivering essential welfare support, from free school meals during half term, to helping people with the cost of energy and water bills.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Our councils have innovated in children services to support the vulnerable and provided new support for young people seeking employment and career advice.

COMBATING ISOLATION

Going that extra mile for those in care settings, providing residents the means to speak to their friends and family during lockdown to tackle social isolation.

The economic hardship caused by pandemic has been most vividly demonstrated by the number of families falling into hardship and in the free schools campaigns of footballer Marcus Rashford. Earlier in the pandemic, county and unitary authorities were provided with resources to support those in need of welfare support, with a further round of winter support announced before Christmas.

Our members have stepped up and delivered for their communities through these grant schemes. The dedicated support and continuation of free school meals, cash payments and vouchers through the school half term has been a life line for families across the country. Moreover, as shown in our case studies, our member councils have also sort to undertake further schemes to support a wider range of welfare needs; from setting up community pantries to provide low cost food, to helping people with the cost of energy and water bills.

Our report in May 2020, *Recovering from Covid-19: Supporting Children and Families* showed how lockdown had intensified many of the challenges facing these at risk groups and outlined just some of the support our councils were putting in place. Equally, our report *Managing Post-Covid Childcare Markets* showed how our councils had responded to the implications of the pandemic for early years providers to ensure that these critical services survive and thrive well beyond the pandemic.

Our case studies show that councils have had to innovate to ensure that those families and children who were already vulnerable before the pandemic continue to receive the support services they need. Moreover, in these tough times for young people, they have also put in place targeted support to help find employment opportunities, career and further education advice.

As we look ahead, the long-term socio-economic impacts of Coronavirus will have challenges for our communities to overcome. The ability of our member councils to think imaginatively and reach into the heart of their communities has been critical for those most in need during the pandemic.

This report shows that going forward we must continue to harness our councils large-scale reach and commissioning, mixed with intimate local knowledge and understanding of their communities to help tackle the socio-economic legacy of Covid-19.

Helping those that need it the most
Case studies

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Community pantries and slow cookers for families

Setting up community pantries where people can buy low-cost food and giving slow cookers to households with little cooking facilities were of the initiatives making up Hampshire County Council's ‘connect4communities’ programme.

The council used the Winter Support Grant from the government to target support to families and individuals on low incomes, especially those with children, who have been hit hard by Coronavirus over winter. The £2.89m fund was also used to provide food vouchers, and payment for energy bills, with the council working with schools and volunteers. It said it would also make available support for people who were made redundant during the pandemic.

Read more here.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Extending free school meals for pupils until Easter

Over 3,200 pupils in Herefordshire are set to receive free school meals over the February and Easter half terms through a council-funded extension of the existing scheme.

The scheme was originally introduced at Christmas to provide support to vulnerable households with children. Under the extended scheme primary and secondary school pupils who are entitled to benefits related free school meals will receive meal provision up to the value of £15 to cover the cost of food for the week of the February half term holidays and up to £33 to cover meals for the longer Easter break through their schools.

Read more here.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Keeping lonely people in care connected with family and friends

Recognising the pandemic has had a huge emotional impact on care home residents unable to see their friends and family, Suffolk County Council delivered over 700 video-enabled devices which can link up with laptops and mobile phones.

These devices, from Alcove Video Carephone, allowed residents with no technological experience to have video calls to those outside of their care homes during the pandemic when visiting was restricted. Devices were also given to people being cared for in their own homes so they can easily speak to their carers and families.

One such story is that of an 83-year old, who used the device to see her granddaughter walk for the first time during the pandemic.

Read more here.

Helping those that need it the most
Case studies

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

Looking long-term to prevent rough sleeping

Wiltshire Council is looking long-term in trying to alleviate homelessness by buying up property to permanently home rough sleepers.

The council has set aside £250,000 to go with government grant funding of £620,000 to buy and convert a one three-bedroom house and three one-bedroom properties to permanently home rough sleepers instead of placing them in temporary accommodation. The council said it recognised that one-bedroom properties are in short supply and rents are high, which is why the authority bought up its own property.

The council uses the app, StreetLink, where people can report where rough sleepers are and the council can send teams to their location.

Read more here.

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Hundreds of families helped in new service - despite pandemic

A new service which launched before the pandemic has stood the test of Coronavirus, with over 1,250 families receiving individual support. Norfolk County Councils' Early Childhood and Family Service is for children at birth to five-year olds and has prevention at its heart. Working with Action for Children, it aims to provide support for individual families, funding for new and existing community groups who support young families, and online and telephone help.

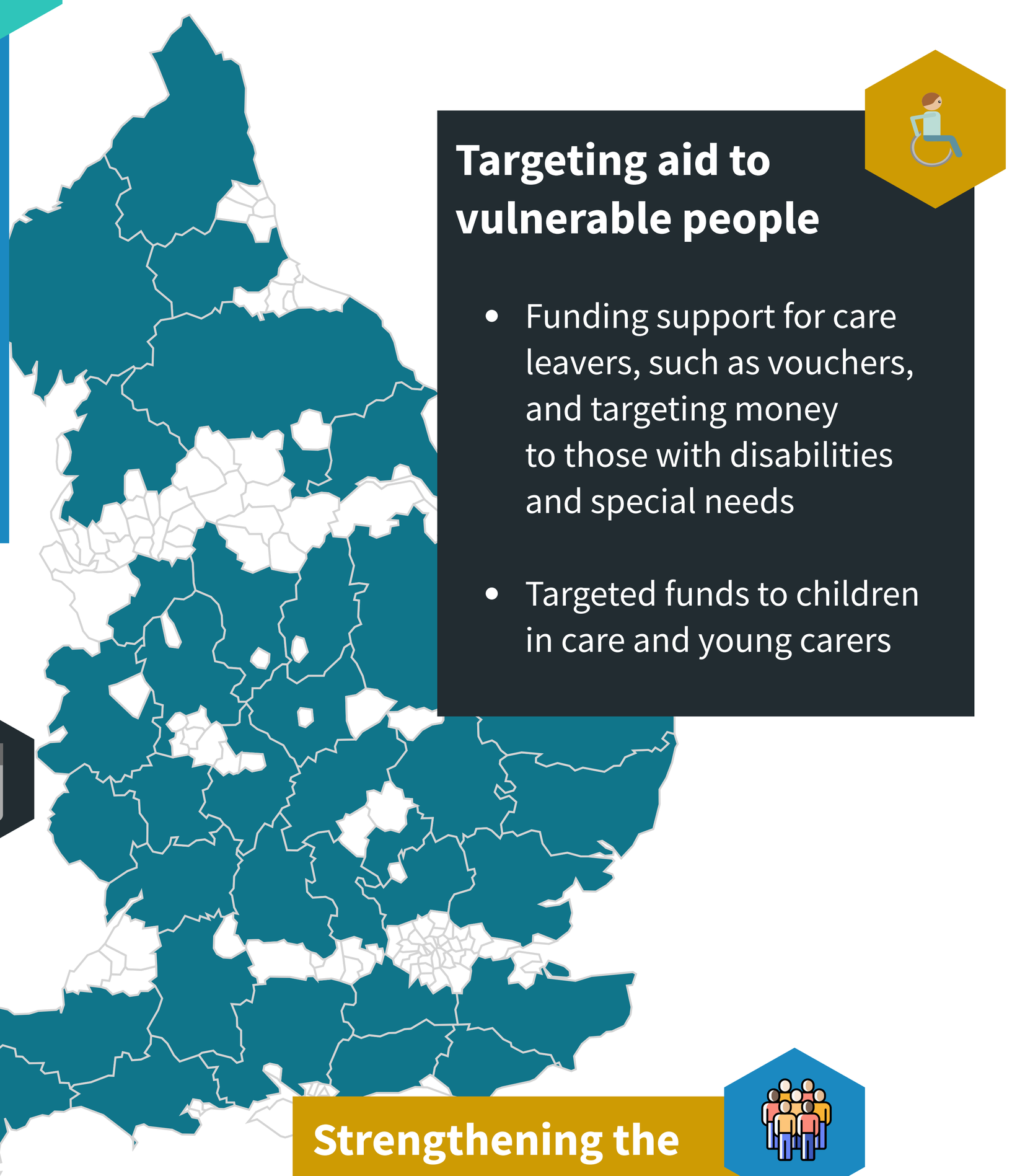
Despite the pandemic, the service has helped over 1,000 individual families in its first year, including £50,000 for families struggling to pay bills due to the financial impact of the virus and for food packages and essential items. The service's success is attributed to being connected across different areas of the council, and in setting up local groups in six areas across Norfolk.

Read more here.

Winter Support Grant: Targeting help to the heart of local communities

Support for free school meals pupils

- Food vouchers for eligible families
- Direct payments to local schools, colleges, and early years providers
- Funding support for applicable over 16s



Targeting aid to vulnerable people

- Funding support for care leavers, such as vouchers, and targeting money to those with disabilities and special needs
- Targeted funds to children in care and young carers

Helping low-income families through

- Vouchers for gas electric bills, direct to families
- Providing slow cookers to families with little facilities
- Free books and activity packs for households

Strengthening the voluntary sector

- Grant funding for food banks and community pantries
- Funding to domestic abuse charities
- Financial support to voluntary groups and Citizens Advice Bureaus

Helping those that need it the most
Case studies

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Targeted support to some of the most vulnerable in East Sussex

East Sussex County Council used parts of its Winter Support Grant to target funds at some of the most vulnerable in the county such as those in the Troubled Families programme, in adult social care, or young people in the council's care.

It also set aside funds to enable the council to award grants ranging from £3,000 to £100,000 to a number of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations across the county so they can continue their vital work helping their communities.

The rest of the £1.5m fund was set aside for food vouchers for free school meals pupils and vulnerable children in early years settings, as well as helping people with the cost of energy and water bills.

Read more here.

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Putting plans in place to protect the county from flash flooding

With many households impacted by the economic effects of the virus, localised flooding could have acted as a double whammy to many people.

When warnings were issued over Storm Christoph in January, North Yorkshire's highways team sprang into action, clearing drains and gullies at flooding hotspots and doubling the amount of sandbags to deploy in the event of flooding, working alongside the county's resilience forum. They heavily monitored key routes and sent more staff to areas susceptible to flooding.

The council also set up diversions to ensure that people were able to get to vaccination centres - helping the national effort in vaccinating the country.

Read more here.

EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Training and skills for young people looking for jobs

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has launched its new ‘No Limit’ programme to give young people training, advice, and support for employment during the pandemic – available to those aged between 18-24.

Recognising this cohort face huge employability challenges with a worldwide recession looming, the council has arranged for dedicated advisors, either online or in person, who identify employment opportunities and set them up with a programme of training or advice, such as developing digital skills.

The programme launched in December and will set up links with local businesses to best match people with prospective jobs is a partnership with the government.

Read more here.

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Careers helpline to support young people in Worcestershire

Schools and colleges may be closed, but the careers helpline set up to support young people during the pandemic remains open to young people in Worcestershire.

Run by Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire LEP, the joint careers helpline is continuing to offer advice, information and guidance to young people across the county despite the latest lockdown measures.

First launched in March 2020 during the first lockdown, this service has been developed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic amid closures of education settings to support the young people of Worcestershire.

Read more here.

Recovering & renewing economies

The all-encompassing impact of Coronavirus on the economy is there for all to see: from the empty high streets due to the present lockdown, to a sharp uptick in unemployment across the country, to changing working patterns.

Research published last August by CCN and Grant Thornton showed that England's counties were the most vulnerable areas in England to the economic impact of Coronavirus, with almost six million employees working in 'at risk' job sectors and the vast majority projected to have an Gross Value Added (GVA) decline greater than the national average.

This report showed that as strategic authorities and major economic players in their areas, CCN's county and unitary authorities have a key role in responding to these unprecedented economic challenges. Their role in leading a place-based recovery can be viewed in two stages:

- The immediate, and short-term interventions aimed at protecting and breathing new life into vital parts of the local economy;

- The second stage is looking to the long-term recovery and building back better: with the recognition that large parts of the economy will never be the same again and the need to adapt as much as rebuild.

How counties are recovering and renewing economies...

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS

Ensured high streets are compliant and safe, provided rent relief for businesses in council-owned buildings, and provided local grant schemes.

ATTRACTING NEW SECTORS

Tailored specific support and schemes to their local areas with loan funding to attract growing industries and enterprise hubs for new businesses to grow.

DRIVING A GREEN RECOVERY

Re-shaping places and their ways of working so that their areas can drive a green recovery, attracting new industries and investing in green infrastructure.

BRINGING FORWARD MAJOR INVESTMENT

Place leadership to drive the recovery through investment, influence and action at scale, unlocking large redevelopment projects and regeneration.

Download our report with *Grant Thornton - Place-Based Recovery* here

In the immediate months of the pandemic, councils have played an important role in helping businesses weather the financial storm of a national lockdown. They have worked with district councils to ensure high streets are compliant and safe, provided rent relief for businesses in council-owned buildings, and our 11 unitary authorities have passported government grants quickly to local enterprise.

But our councils role goes much further in the short term - our latest set of case studies show that they have provided tailored support and schemes to their local areas: from subsidising broadband in an era of working from home, providing enterprise hubs for new businesses to flourish, to establishing local grant schemes to support rural pubs with funds over Christmas when they had to remain closed.

If the short-term challenges have been tough, the long-term issues facing localities could be set to be even more substantive. The latest unemployment data shows that in counties the number of people on jobseekers allowance has more than doubled from 350,245 in March 2020 to 765,020 in November. At the height of the pandemic, some 3.5 million workers were on furlough in county areas, almost half (46%) of all those on the government scheme.

Getting economies back on their feet will require county authorities to use their size and expertise to set the vision for how they fight back from these dramatic changes in local economies; working with the private sector to reshape and reform as they recover. They are the vital place leader for driving the changes required through investment, influence and action at scale, while also enabling the retraining and upskilling of the workforce to adapt to fundamental changes in the labour market.

Our latest set of case studies already show how county and unitary authorities are using their ability to take action, convene and influence: from rubber-stamping millions in loan funding to attract growing industries that produce for the good of the nation, to unlocking large redevelopment projects, to re-shaping places and their ways of working so that their areas can drive a green recovery.

Covid-19 and the response of CCN member councils has only strengthened the argument for ensuring that a place-based response should remain at the forefront of policymaking in relation to both the short-term economic recovery as well as the delivery of longer term, sustainable growth.

Recovering & renewing economies
Case studies

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Subsidising gigabit broadband for businesses and households

With the pandemic making a lot more households and businesses reliant on fast broadband, Shropshire Council is helping to give more people access to gigabit speeds in its rural areas by subsidising their service. Working with the government, the council is making £1m available to eligible people based in remote towns and villages. The council will top up the government voucher for installation and costs for homes by £2,500 to total £4,000 and by £3,5000 for businesses to total £7,000 per business.

The vouchers subsidise the installation of gigabit broadband in areas where it is not commercially viable for operators. The council's Connecting Shropshire scheme has helped bring superfast broadband to 68,000 properties since 2013.

Read more here.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

New enterprise hub to form focal part of town centre regeneration

A new enterprise hub from Staffordshire County Council in Stafford will serve the dual purpose of helping to ensure local startups flourish and being part of the town centre's regeneration.

The council has secured £1.6m in funding for the £2m project to refurbish part of Stafford's Shire Hall, formerly a library, into a workspace for over 20 businesses. The rest of the funding will be supplied by the county council.

Like the county council's other enterprise centres, it will offer office space, reception facilities, meeting areas, networking opportunities and business advice and support.

Read more here.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

£100m fund to build legacy projects designed by communities

A £100m fund by the council has been designed to give local people and groups in Surrey a chance to create and deliver projects designed by local people, which could have a big impact on where they live.

Your Fund Surrey aims to give communities the power and financial backing to design and deliver projects themselves by bidding for capital funding.

The fund is designed to instil a community legacy from the response to Coronavirus by supporting projects designed by local people, for local people. This could range from a new sports pitch, to high street improvements, or a new community centre. Suggested projects can be plotted on an interactive online map.

Read more here.

Recovering & renewing economies
Case studies

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

First-of-its kind agreement to deliver affordable & green homes

Warwickshire County Council is the first local authority in the country to set up a ‘working agreement’ with Homes England in a pilot that could unlock the development of thousands of new affordable and environmentally friendly homes.

It follows on from the council setting up its own housing development company in October, and the agreement means that the authority will benefit from Homes England’s influence, expertise, and resources.

The council said the agreement was an ‘important milestone’ in the area’s recovery from Coronavirus. The development company and partnership aims to unlock major regeneration schemes on several sites in the county, with homes for market and affordable prices, and built with environmental considerations.

Read more here.

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

A Christmas present to help rural pubs stay afloat

Rural pubs are often the heartbeat of local village communities and have struggled throughout the pandemic and successive lockdowns.

In a bid to keep them afloat, Leicestershire County Council is making available £1,000 to individual village and rural pubs across the county during the Christmas period when they had to close during a time when they would be at their busiest.

The scheme, thought to be one of its kind in the country, aims to help out 200 pubs across Leicestershire over the Christmas period. In just five days after the launch of the initiative money had been sent to 28 businesses and so far 110 pubs have received funding, with a further 36 in processing.

Read more here.

Recovering & renewing economies
Case studies

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

New online adult education courses to up-skill

In recognition that their local economy is going to look different at the end of the pandemic, Kent County Council has launched online courses for adults so they can up-skill themselves.

The ‘Employment Essentials’ free online courses are designed for anyone looking for a new job or wanting to progress their career can obtain the important skills they need from courses covering vital areas such as increasing confidence, preparing for interviews and writing a CV.

From March onwards, Kent Adult Education will also be running a range of courses to help with mental health and wellbeing. They are intended to help you learn more about the causes, symptoms and management of a variety of everyday challenges.

Read more here.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Council’s carbon neutral plan shortlisted for award

Whilst the immediate response to the Coronavirus saw councils focus on providing economic support to their businesses and communities, many also had an eye on long-term challenges too.

As such, Cheshire East Council rubber-stamped its first-ever climate emergency plan in May – virtually. Its ambitious targets to be carbon neutral by 2025 have won national recognition and the council was shortlisted for an award from an industry leader.

The council’s plan focusses not only on how the 2025 target will be achieved, but also on how the council will encourage all businesses, residents and organisations to reduce emissions. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment which showcases individuals and organisations making the changes needed to tackle the climate emergency, shortlisted the council for an award.

Read more here.

Recovering & renewing economies
Case studies

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Attracting new businesses geared to solving society's challenges

Lancashire County Council has rubber-stamped a £10m loan to attract companies with a twofold ambition: industries in growing sectors and those who are addressing social and environmental challenges.

The fund is designed to help attract businesses working in artificial intelligence, ageing society, clean growth, and future transport sectors to the county. Not only are these growing economies which will create jobs and growth for the county, but they are sectors seeking to pioneer solutions to major challenges such as climate change and an ageing society. The council said that the impact of the pandemic is speeding up a shift in Lancashire's industrial base, so it was imperative they begin to attract new sectors. The loan will sit alongside a £12.8m Covid recovery programme.

Read more here.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Becoming more ambitious in reaching carbon targets

Gloucestershire County Council has cut its own carbon emissions by 97% since 2007, with the local authority's progress resulting in the council moving its target to be carbon neutral by five years to 2045.

The council declared a climate emergency in 2019, the council made the switch to a green energy tariff meaning all its electric for its buildings, streetlights, and signs are powered by clean energy, and the council's electric vehicle fleet are powered by solar panels. The council has approved its next five-year plan to reduce carbon emissions in the county, and working with partners, aims for 20% of the county to be covered in trees by 2030.

Read more here.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

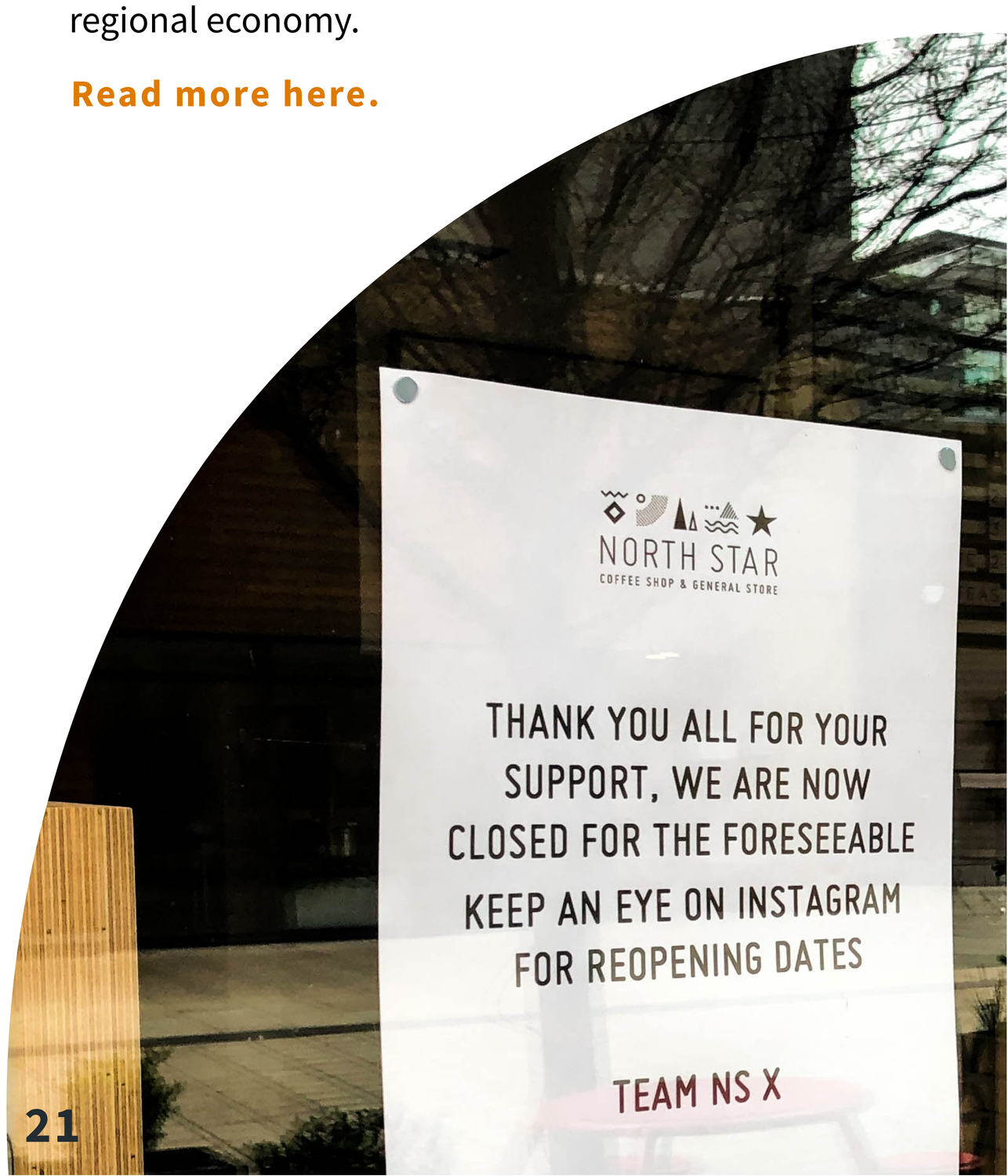
Council to help unlock major redevelopment sites

Nottinghamshire County Council is one of the key financial backers to unlock an ambitious plan to create regeneration sites in three areas dubbed vital for economic recovery from Coronavirus.

The formation of the East Midlands Development Corporation, a partnership of local authorities, businesses, and universities is moving closer thanks to the county council contributing £1.5m to total a £4.5m package from all the area's councils. The plans include the creation of a 'national skills academy', which will aim to focus on re-training people in recognition the post-pandemic economy is going to look a lot different, and re-purposing Ratcliffe-on-Soar into a global centre for net zero carbon technologies and better local and regional transport services.

The council estimates that the plans could create 84,000 jobs and be worth £4.8bn a year to the regional economy.

Read more here.



6 Ways counties can help rethink local economies & drive the recovery

Vision-Setter

A clear and unified place-based strategy will be important to driving local recovery strategies. County authorities are taking the lead role across multiple partners in establishing this vision. It is a process that requires clear place-based leadership alongside boldness and creativity. The vision provides a roadmap for the area by bringing partners and budgets together.

Capacity

Through recovery strategies counties can enable capacity at both county scale and the local town, providing resources to support the development and delivery of key projects and programmes. By convening partners county authorities are also able to leverage resources and ensure a shared focus on action, and support engagement with Central Government.

Investment

Counties will be a major investor in local economies to support the recovery. Of the £24bn gross revenue and capital expenditure on growth related services in the 36 counties between 2015 - 2018, 58% of this was by county councils and county unitaries. Despite pressure on budgets, County authorities will continue to to make significant investments.

Seed-Funder

Counties enable strategic leadership by using capital programmes to fund projects, release wider opportunities or unlock latent potential. While relatively small sums of money are involved, the catalytic nature of this investment is much greater, helping unlock private sector investment and providing confidence to the market to aid the commercial viability for key projects.

New Markets

Some sectors will thrive as a result of Covid-19. Recognising these sectoral strengths will be important for county authorities as they could help to lead the recovery process and act as enablers or confidence builders in the local economy. With increased public focus on climate change also providing an opportunity to rethink economic growth and pave the way for a green recovery.

Town Centres

The enforced lockdown and associated increased dependence on online shopping has brought to the fore important questions about what the future of the highstreet should be. The behavioural changes present an opportunity for towns to be reimagined, refocused and transformed. Regeneration needs to be ambitious and large scale and to link with future working patterns.

CCN

COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK

Founded in 1997, the County Councils Network is the voice of England's counties. A cross-party organisation, CCN develops policy, commissions research, and presents evidence-based solutions nationally on behalf of the largest grouping of local authorities in England.

In total, the 25 county councils and 11 unitary councils that make up the CCN represent 26 million residents, account for 39% of England's GVA, and deliver high-quality services that matter the most to local communities

The network is a cross party organisation, expressing the views of member councils to the government and within the Local Government Association.

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