

CCN

A n a l y s i s

***Recovering from Covid-19:  
Supporting Children and Families***



**May 2020**

## INTRODUCTION

The current Covid-19 health emergency has dramatically affected communities across every corner of England. County authorities, covering nearly half the country, have been in the vanguard of meeting the immediate challenges that these unprecedented times have presented – from shielding vulnerable residents and helping source Personal Protective Equipment, whilst maintaining essential services such as caring for looked after children or ensuring roads are repaired for access by the emergency services.

This burden has already placed an inexorable strain on local authority finances responding to immediate challenges - such as within Adult Social Care. However, as the gravity of both the health and economic consequences of this unprecedented period begin to become clearer, all councils are needing to think of what the future demands of them are likely to be – and indeed how these will be funded.

One of these demands will undoubtedly be responding to the needs of those who have faced unprecedented hardship during the course of the crisis. Significant numbers of children and their families are likely to be particularly hard hit by a number of potential calamities –

- Bereavement of a family member;
- Poverty and hardship caused by unemployment/loss of income due to the economic shutdown;
- Experience and escalation of abuse, domestic violence, or exploitation during lockdown;
- Loss of several months schooling;
- Continuing illness or ongoing need to isolate due to vulnerability even after lockdown is lifted;
- Enforced relocation/new school due to circumstances caused by the impact of Covid 19;
- Developmental trauma caused by all of the above, alongside persistent collective societal messaging which many children are unable to fully grasp or comprehend.

Local authorities are presently doing their best to maintain services for the most vulnerable children and families albeit as far as is limited by present constraints. But thoughts are already turning to how to help manage the expected short to medium-term surge in demand for family services as lockdown measures being to ease . The County Councils Network (CCN) working with its 36 Member Councils has already estimated the additional costs expected in Children's Social Care across the coming year at this stage of the pandemic:

<b>Children's Social Care - workforce pressures:</b>	<b>£18,632,000</b>
<b>Children's Social Care - residential care:</b>	<b>£58,219,000</b>
<b>Children's Social Care - care leavers:</b>	<b>£6,039,000</b>
<b>Children's Social Care - other:</b>	<b>£48,914,000</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£131,804,000</b>

This report draws on research which was close to being finalised by CCN just as the crisis took hold, which is published in full in the report *Children's Services Funding & Early Intervention*. This short paper places the findings within the subsequent context of Recovery from Covid-19 which local authorities now face.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research report *Children's Services Funding and Early Intervention* uses data from LG Futures, PwC and a Survey of CCN Member Authorities to provide a comprehensive overview of trends in Children's Social Care Funding, Spending and Demand over the past five years. This short paper draws out some of the key findings which are likely to impact the ability of County Authorities to respond to the needs of children and families which is anticipated will arise from the Covid-19 crisis.

### Headline Findings

- Since 2015/6 total funding for Children's Social Care has decreased by more than a quarter across England, and by over 35% in County Authorities.
- This is despite estimated spending need for Children's Social Care rising by a fifth over this time - with numbers of looked after children increasing by 15% in County Areas as an indicator of increased demand.
- The combination of declining funding and rising demand has meant councils have had to decrease spending on preventative services - or 'early intervention' - in order to ensure they meet their statutory duties. Practically this has meant cuts to services such as Youth Clubs or Sure Start Children's Centres which are likely to be crucial to supporting children and families during recovery from Covid-19.
- Targeted Family Support has been better maintained largely due to the impact of the Troubled Families Programme. 70% of CCN Member Authorities said the programme had helped them to protect some early intervention spending.
- However, the payment-by-results aspect of the programme has proved a bureaucratic means of obtaining funding. With indicators used to draw down funding such as School Attendance and Transition into Employment severely disrupted by the pandemic, councils are concerned about whether they will be able to access the £165m funding held centrally to support the programme during 2020/1. Presently only a small number of councils are exempted from payment-by-results and receive money directly under 'earned autonomy' status granted by the Department for Education.
- The Troubled Families Programme is currently due to expire in March 2021. Without certainty of funding county authorities are concerned about their ability to develop a strategy for recovery which runs beyond the short-term, even though problems for families arising from the effects of pandemic are likely to extend well into the decade.

## Recommendations

Alongside the wider long-term calls for reform to Children's Social Care funding contained in *Children's Services Funding and Early Intervention* CCN is makes the following recommendations for the immediate response to recovery.

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

Disapply payment-by-results criteria for Troubled Families during 2020/1. Instead distribute this funding directly to all authorities on the existing 'earned autonomy' principle to support local Covid-19 recovery efforts with families.

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

Begin to set out reforms for the Troubled Families programme beyond 2020/1 centred on helping families to recover from the Covid-19 emergency across the medium- to long-term.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

Rename the Troubled Families programme to become less stigmatising and more inclusive as the nature of the families targeted by the programme change due to the impact of Covid-19.

## PART ONE: SUMMARY OF FUNDING ISSUES

This first section summarises key findings relating to the funding available to Children's Social Care since 2015/6. It draws on data contained in the CCN report *Children's Services Funding and Early Intervention* commissioned by CCN from LG Futures and PwC. A more detailed analysis of these findings can be found by studying the full technical paper which is published simultaneously with this short report.

### 1: Funding of Children's Services 2015 to 2020

The amount of Total Core Grant Funding (TCGF) allocated for Children's Social Care - that is, the proportion of money provided by central government in direct funding to local government nominally to fund children's services - has declined precipitously over the past four years.

With an average reduction in funding across England of nearly a third, all types of local authority have been hit by this decline - but some have fared worse than others. As the graph below shows CCN Member Councils have been particularly badly hit losing nearly £391m (39.5%) of their funding in this time - substantially more than any other type of authority and nearly double the proportional amount of reductions felt in London Boroughs.

#### Total Core Grant Funding for Children's Social Care (w/o Temporary Grant Funding) 2015/16 - 2019/20

	2015-6 (£/m)	2016-7 (£/m)	2017-8 (£/m)	2018-9 (£/m)	2019-20 (£/m)	(£m) +/-	% +/-
<b>CCN Member Councils</b>	989.13	853.33	733.16	653.33	598.28	-390.85	-39.51%
<b>Non-CCN Unitaries</b>	586.44	527.17	472.94	439.62	413.12	-173.31	-29.55%
<b>Metropolitan Boroughs</b>	904.65	818.32	744.93	702.22	664.42	-240.22	-26.55%
<b>Inner London Boroughs</b>	375.59	349.08	322.55	305.27	291.88	-83.71	-22.29%
<b>Outer London Boroughs</b>	417.66	378.74	341.10	316.34	297.98	-119.69	-28.66%
<b>ENGLAND</b>	3,273.46	2,926.63	2,614.68	2,416.78	2,265.68	-1,007.78	-32.52%

In order to supplement reductions to Total Core Grant Funding, the Government has provided various streams of Temporary Grant Funding to local authorities including for Adults & Children's Social Care - the total amounts are set out in the table below. The amount of Temporary Grant Funding directed towards ASC over the period covered by this report dwarfs the commensurate amount that has been provided to CSC – more than 20 times higher across the whole of England in total. The disparity in Temporary Grant Funding between the two services has only recently been partially rectified by the Social Care Grant 2019/20 which offered councils the flexibility for it to be used across both ASC and CSC.

## Comparison of Temporary Grant Funding between Children's and Adults Social Care

	Children's Social Care (£/m)	Adult Social Care (£/m)
CCN Member Councils	36.56	933.57
Non-CCN Unitaries	17.35	392.06
Metropolitan Boroughs	25.26	689.49
Inner London Boroughs	9.13	189.23
Outer London Boroughs	12.27	187.72
<b>ENGLAND</b>	101.02	2,392.06

The uplift provided by Temporary Grant Funding has been marginal for Children's Social Care - merely reducing the 39.5% decline in Total Core Grant Funding to just under 36% in CCN Member Authorities over the past five years. Overall across England the amount of funding lost in this time comes down from just under a third, but still remains well above a quarter (figures for all types of authority are included on page in the report).

## Total Funding (with Temporary Grant Funding) for Children's Social Care 2015/6 - 2019/20

	2015-6 (£/m)	2016-7 (£/m)	2017-8 (£/m)	2018-9 (£/m)	2019-20 (£/m)	(£m) +/-	% +/-
CCN Member Councils	989.13	853.33	733.16	653.34	634.84	-354.29	-35.82%
Non-CCN Unitaries	586.44	527.17	472.94	439.62	430.48	-155.96	-26.59%
Metropolitan Boroughs	904.65	818.32	744.93	702.22	673.55	-231.10	-25.55%
Inner London Boroughs	375.59	349.08	322.55	305.27	304.15	-71.44	-19.02%
Outer London Boroughs	417.66	378.74	341.10	316.34	323.24	-94.42	-22.61%
<b>ENGLAND</b>	3,098.60	2,926.63	2,614.68	2,416.78	2,366.70	-906.76	-27.70%

## 2: Demand for Children's Services 2015 to 2020

Indicators of demand are rising - for instance the numbers of looked after children in county areas have increased by 15% since 2015, compared to a 12% increase across England [1]. In May 2019, CCN published an *Independent Review of Local Government Spending Need and Funding* [2]. The central part of this modelling focused on calculating Estimated Spending Need in different types of council for various services, including Children's Social Care shown in the table overleaf:

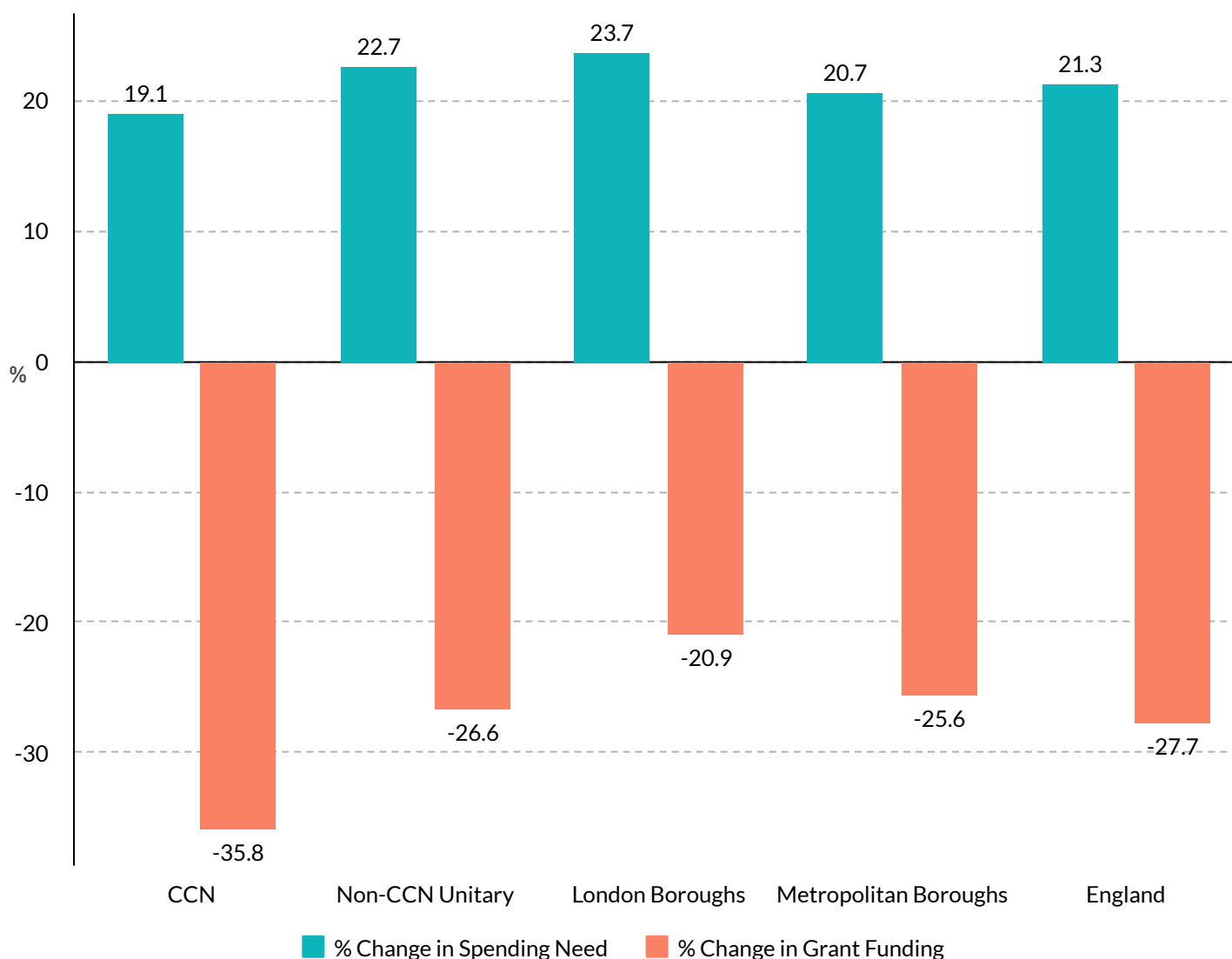
[1] *Children Looked After in England including Adoption* (ONS, 2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>

[2] *Independent Review of Local Government Spending Need and Funding (Executive Summary)* (CCN/PwC, 2019) <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/download/2258/>

	2015-6 (£/m)	2016-7 (£/m)	2017-8 (£/m)	2018-9 (£/m)	2019-20 (£/m)	(£m) +/-	% +/-
<b>CCN Member Councils</b>	3,123	3,119	3,297	3,594	3,720	597	19.12%
<b>Non-CCN Unitaries</b>	1,627	1,708	1,762	1,926	1,997	370	22.74%
<b>Metropolitan Boroughs</b>	1,446	1,481	1,532	1,667	1,746	300	20.79%
<b>London Boroughs</b>	2,106	2,230	2,303	2,511	2,605	499	23.69%

This Estimated Spending Need can then be plotted on a chart against total funding reductions (including Temporary Grant Funding - see main paper) to show the combined effect of increasing demand and declining resources in different types of local authority. The paper terms this 'divergence'.

### 'Divergence' of Estimated Spending Need and Total Funding for Children's Social Care



The divergence in CCN Member Councils – comprising an increase in Estimated Spending Need of 19.1% and a reduction in total funding for Children's Social Care of 35.8% – is larger than any other type of authority.

### 3: Spending Trends in Children's Services - 2015 to 2020

A sharp rise in demand occurring in tandem with a decrease in funding has meant local authorities have been forced into tough choices over which services they should prioritise. The analysis uses Section 251 returns to determine the changes that have occurred since 2015/6 regarding spending on Statutory/Demand-led services (such as those for children being taken into care) compared to Prevention/Early Intervention services (such as Sure Start children's centres or youth clubs).

The graph below shows that whilst spending on services which meet immediate statutory need have risen in most types of council, in order to help meet this demand there have at the same time been significant reductions to services which are more preventative in nature.

**Overall change between Statutory/Demand-led and Preventative/Early Intervention Spending in Children's Social Care 2015/6 - 2019/20**





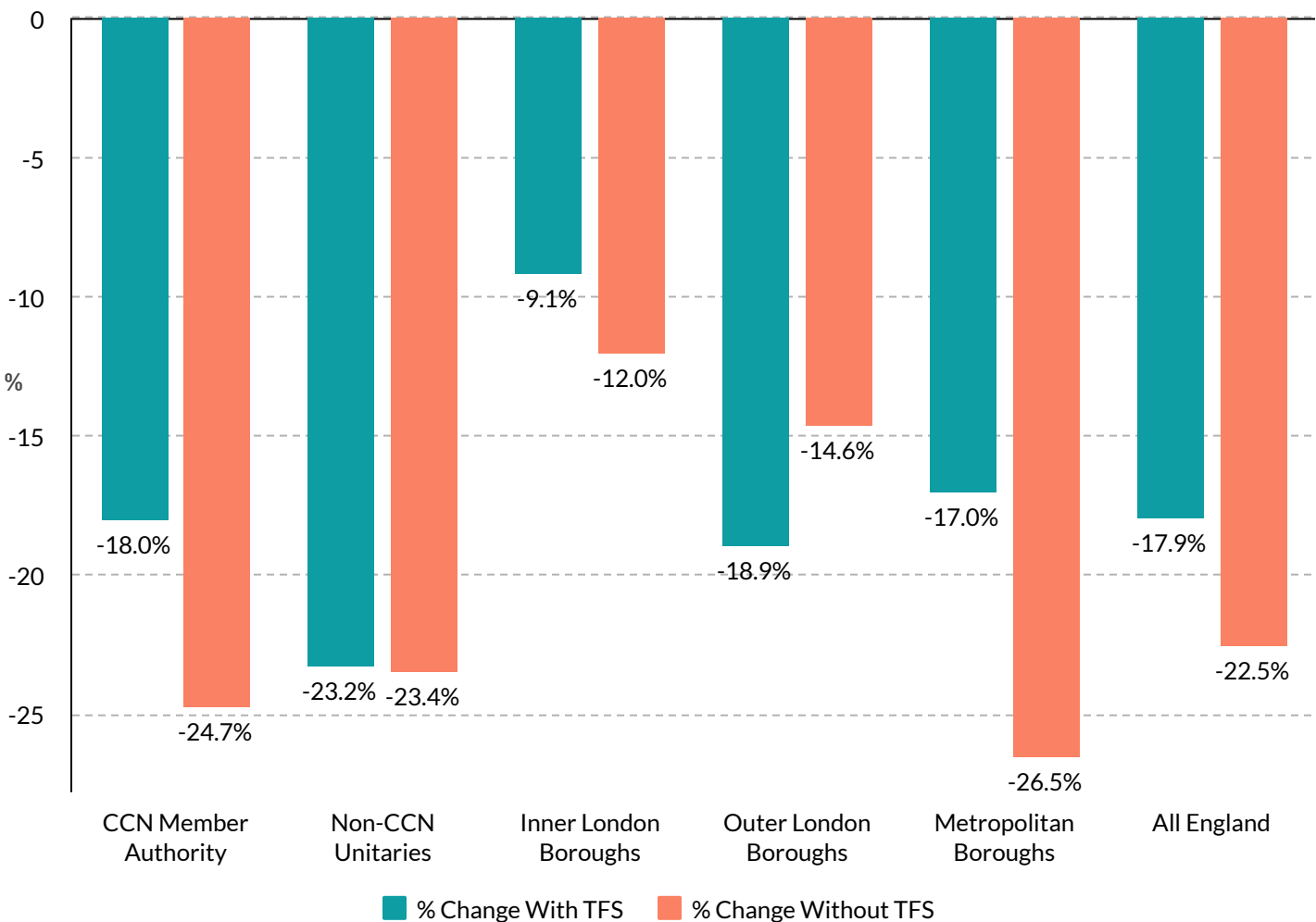
## PART TWO: TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME IMPACT

### Early Intervention and the Troubled Families Programme

The data summarised in Part One shows a clear picture of how local authorities have faced a 'perfect storm' of reducing funding at the same time as demand for Children's Social Care has risen. In response local authorities have diverted funding that they had previously been spending on prevention into instead prioritising their statutory duties around social care. Part Two now looks at how preventative spending by local authorities has been impacted by the support of the Troubled Families Programme.

However, deeper analysis highlights a significant proportional change in expenditure on preventative services depending on the inclusion of Targeted Family Support - of the sort supplemented by payment-by-results payments from the Troubled Families Programme. Overall in England once this service is removed it increases the scale of reductions by almost a third from 17.9% to 22.5%. This suggests that the Troubled Families Programme has been important in incentivising spending on preventative children's services, substantially mitigating reductions to local authority expenditure on early intervention overall.

### Change in expenditure on Preventative/Early Intervention services with and without Targeted Family Support



Local authorities are recognised as the lead agency working for children's welfare - acting as corporate parent to those in the care system; providing support for those with special educational needs and disabilities; and supporting local education across schools, further education colleges, and childcare providers. Perhaps less noticed though, is the extensive work conducted by local authorities around preventative services for the most vulnerable children and families, sometimes referred to as 'early help' or 'early intervention'.

The aim of early intervention is to try stop problems within families happening at a point before they grow out of control, often with large (and expensive) social consequences. For example, Sure Start children's centres provide a range of services open to all offering not only parenting and/or health support in the early years, but also a means to access practical advice on matters such as finding a job, cooking a healthy meal, or resolving problem debt. Similarly, 'edge of care' services are deployed where a child may be deemed at risk of being taken into care in order to work with a family to keep the child safely within the home. Forms of such services have existed for decades, but more recently much of this work at local level has been driven primarily by the Government's Troubled Families agenda (see panel on next page).

The Covid-19 health emergency has presented unprecedented challenges for the country and the economy which are likely to play out for many years to come. County authorities are already looking ahead to planning for recovery after the immediate alert has passed and the impact on children and families is foremost in these considerations. One almost certain outcome, though, is that the number of children and their families who will need support of the sort offered by the Troubled Families programme is likely to significantly grow – and probably grow unpredictably as the effects of the lockdown and the impact of the economy affect different individual families in different ways.

Many children – even those from families which would never previously come to the attention of children's social care – will have to face the grief and pain of losing someone close to them such as a grandparent and, in the most extreme cases, their primary carer(s). Others will be plunged suddenly from comfortable living into insecurity as the economic toll leads to unemployment and/or debt for their parents. Almost all are already bewildered by news and rules they don't fully comprehend and fears they had not previously experienced – this trauma is likely to mark a generation.

But for the most vulnerable families the concerns are even more severe. Since lockdown as few as 5% of vulnerable children who are eligible have been attending school [4]; Children's Social Care referrals are reported to have as much as halved [5]; calls to domestic abuse helplines have increased by 120% [6]; and police have warned that school closures have if anything, put children more at risk of exploitation through county lines drug trading even despite the restrictions on travel [7]. These are all warning signs that when doors open again there may be an increase in real problems – and problems which would normally be first noticed by the regular contact with teachers and school which doesn't presently exist for most.

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[3] The Troubled Families Programme (England) (House of Commons Library Briefing, 2020)  
<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7585>

[4] <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/apr/22/make-it-compulsory-for-vulnerable-children-to-go-to-school-no-10-urged>

[5] *ADCS president: children's social care referrals down by up to half*, Local Government Chronicle - 23 April 2020

[6] <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/apr/22/every-abuser-is-more-volatile-the-truth-behind-the-shocking-rise-of-domestic-violence-killings>

[7] <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/13/gangs-still-forcing-children-into-county-lines-drug-trafficking-police-covid-19-lockdown>

**PANEL - What is the Troubled Families Programme?**

The Troubled Families Programme was launched by the Coalition Government in 2011 and funding began in 2012. It is described as:

*"...a programme of targeted intervention for families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse. One aim of the Programme is to tackle issues before they require costlier interventions. Staff funded by the Programme identify 'troubled families' in their area and usually assign a keyworker to each family, acting as a single point of contact. The Government uses a 'payment-by-results' model to incentivise positive outcomes. This involves both an upfront attachment fee to local authorities and a reward payment for each family that shows sustained improvement across set criteria or moves into continuous employment." [3]*

The Troubled Families Programme initially provided £448m to 2015 for LAs to work with 120,000 families. It was subsequently renewed with a second phase continuing until 2020 offering £920m funding to work with 400,000 families. In April 2018 the Government granted 14 local authorities (including three CCN Member Authorities) 'earned autonomy' status, which disapplied the payment-by-results element for these areas:

*"In place of Payment by Results (PbR), these areas receive up front funding from the Troubled Families Programme in line with an agreed payment schedule and with the aim of supporting accelerated service transformation for Early Help." [19]*

The second phase was most recently extended as part of the Spending 'Roll Forward' for 2020/21 with another £165m announced to allow local authorities to continue delivering services until March 2021. It is presently unclear whether the Programme will continue beyond next year. This phase was most recently extended as part of the Spending 'Roll Forward' for 2020/21 with another £165m announced to allow local authorities to continue delivering services until March 2021. It is presently unclear whether the Programme will continue beyond next year.

Whereas the impact of the Covid-19 emergency on the Adult Social Care system has been visible and already a matter of priority in public debate, it is as yet unclear what may be happening for the most vulnerable children behind closed doors. The Government has provided welcome financial support to ease the acute pressures on local authorities in providing Adult Social Care. But as events move towards recovery councils are likely to need more significant support for Children's Social Care to ensure that children and their families are properly helped to recover and not spiral into deeper problems and poorer outcomes as a result of the crisis.

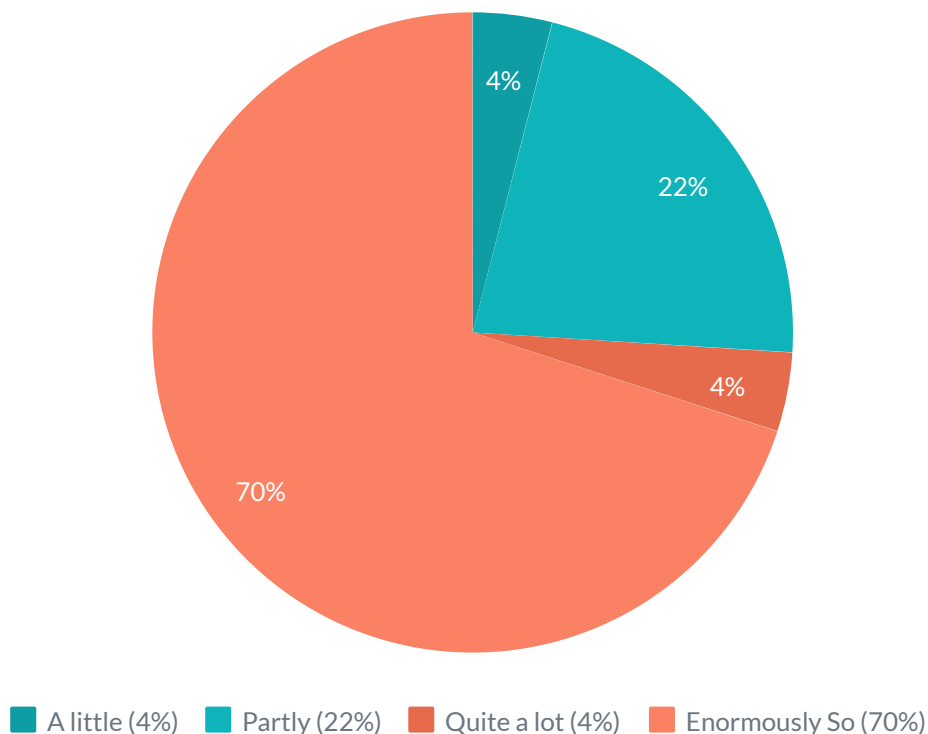
As part of this in the short-term the Troubled Families Programme needs to be refocused now to play an important part in the recovery during this year. But the Government also needs to use the emergency as a springboard to properly reform the programme for the new decade so it can also play an integral role in supporting recovery in the medium- to long-term.

## Survey of CCN Member Authorities

As part of the report *Children's Services Funding and Early Intervention* CCN surveyed its 36 member authorities in January 2020 on range issues around the funding and provision of Children's Social Care. The survey received a response rate of 64% representing 23 authorities.

The results of the complete survey can be found in the full report. The following data has been pulled out as provides some perspective on how local authorities presently operate the Troubled Families programme locally; how it impacts on their service offer; and what their views are on how the programme should develop in the future, even before the effects of the global pandemic became clear.

### QUESTION 1: Do you feel the Troubled Families Programme has helped to protect your local authority's spending on services which could be described as Preventative/Early Intervention?



Firstly local authorities were asked how far the money provided by the Troubled Families had helped them to protect spending on preventative services. CCN Member Authorities overwhelmingly felt that the Troubled Families Programme had helped to protect spending on Prevention/Early Intervention services with every one believing it had done so at least in part. Almost three-quarters felt it had been crucially important:

***“Without the [Troubled Families] programme our early help from the LA would be significantly reduced.”***

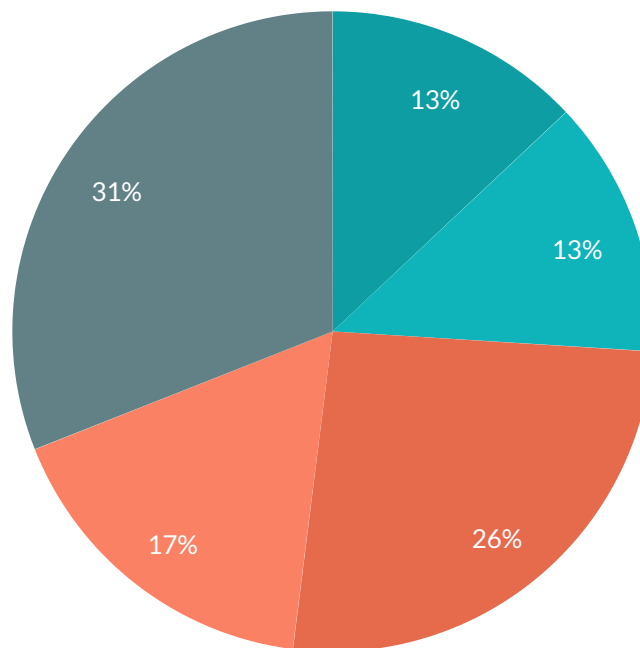
The funding had allowed local authorities to invest in a variety of different types of preventative services and encouraged the adoption of local approaches:

*“We have used Troubled Families money to promote our prevention of neglect strategy, our housing support, direct practical help for families, Early Help workers, benefits advice.”*

It was felt this particular aspect should be seen by Ministers as a key strength of the programme, not a weakness, as it enabled local authorities to do what they do best – tailoring approaches to meet the needs of their communities. This will become ever more important in the wake of the present emergency.

*“The [Troubled Families] programme has been adopted in different ways nationally, however despite this the programme has provided a solid platform to build early intervention services.”*

**QUESTION 2: Do you feel Troubled Families has helped to incentivise new spending by your authority on services which could be described as Preventative/Early Intervention?**



■ Not at all (13%) ■ A little (13%) ■ Partly (26%) ■ Quite a lot (17%) ■ Enormously So (31%)

CCN was also interested to find out whether Troubled Families funding had helped incentivise the development of new spending on early intervention prior to the emergency. There was no clear consensus on the answer suggesting it depended on the nature of each council's individual prevention strategies. However only 13% of respondents felt that it wasn't the case at all, with around half believing the programme had incentivised spending 'quite a lot' or 'enormously so'.

*“PBR has enabled investment to be made with early intervention services but sadly such investments have been offset by the need to make savings due to funding reductions. However without TF and PBR the cuts to those services would have been greater.”*

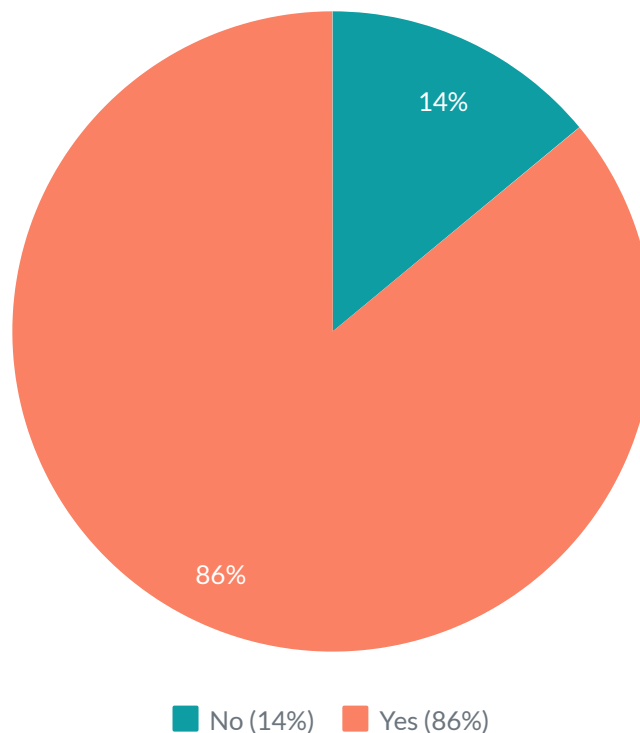
Some though felt that whilst access to the funding pot itself was helpful the payment-by-results aspect had

become less useful as an incentive over time, perhaps because once services have become successful at securing the right outcomes the need to innovate becomes less urgent:

*“The original [Troubled Families] money incentivised the new ways of working and thinking which included the use of payment-by-results. The payment-by-results has become less useful and can destabilise the transformation.”*

Given that the majority of CCN member authorities believe Troubled Families funding has both protected existing spending and incentivised new spending, it was clear that a large majority believed that the programme should be continued in the upcoming Spending Review, with 86% of respondents agreeing.

### QUESTION 3: Do you believe the Troubled Families Programme should be continued in the Spending Review?



The survey then asked CCN member authorities whether they believed the Troubled Families programme should be continued in the spending review – which was at the time scheduled for the coming autumn, although obviously the Government has now confirmed due to the emergency situation this will be pushed back.

Many CCN Member Authorities highlighted how Troubled Families funding was crucial to maintaining an offer for families offer locally. As such it was felt vitally important that when the Spending Review takes place it ensures greater certainty of this funding throughout the course of the parliament:

*“The programme should be continued for at least five years to allow a more strategic planning approach.”*

Also given the success local authorities have made of Troubled Families over eight years it would be more cost-efficient now to loosen the bureaucracy around the programme:

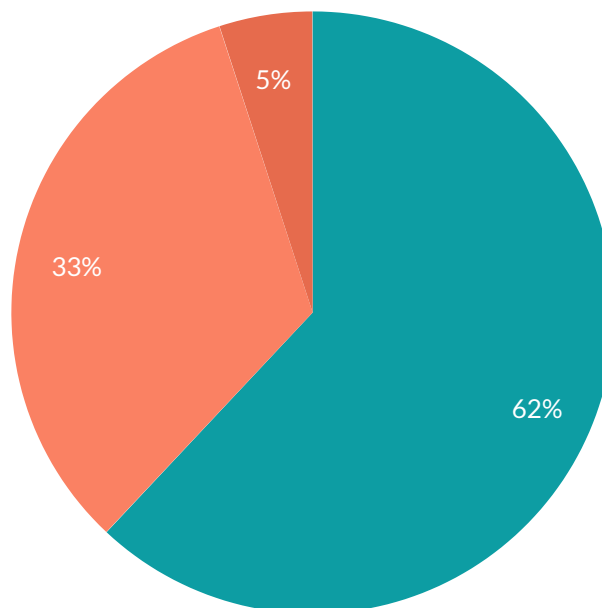
*“The funding is valued and has helped to protect early intervention activity at local level, however the fewer strings attached to funding the better council's ability to align to local priorities and need, and the lower the cost of processes to account for use of funds. Short term/grant funding does not support sustainable services which bring about effective change in the longer term.”*

Particularly the payment-by-results aspect for councils that do not already have 'earned autonomy' status, which has removed this element of the funding system for a small number of approved authorities:

*“The funding has been used effectively to ensure there is a continued focus on early intervention despite pressures on high cost late intervention. The programme has now matured enough however for this to be funded without payment-by-results.”*

*“I am trusted with £200m investment in [my authority] but have to go through payment-by-results for £1.5m from Troubled Families which seems an awful lot of unnecessary work for everyone involved.”*

**QUESTION 4: Do you believe central government funding for Troubled Families should...?:**



■ Be decreased and LA Budgets for Early Intervention increased (62%)    ■ Stay the same (33%)  
 ■ Be increased and LA Budgets for Early Intervention decreased (5%)

The survey then tried to get a sense of how CCN member authorities have felt the balance between the reductions in their own budgets over recent years were being offset by incentives for them to spend created by Troubled Families' central budget. As such respondents were asked to consider – in the event of the total quantum of local authority grants for children's services and central Troubled Families

funding remaining the same going forward – how they believed this funding for Early Intervention should be traded off between local and central pots.

Nearly two-thirds felt that the central budget for Troubled Families should be decreased in favour of Early Intervention funding provided directly to local authorities, whilst a third were content with the present balance. Just one authority said they would be happy for their own budget to be decreased in favour of more funding for early intervention being made available from the Troubled Families Programme.

Several authorities remarked that they ideally wanted both budgets to increase:

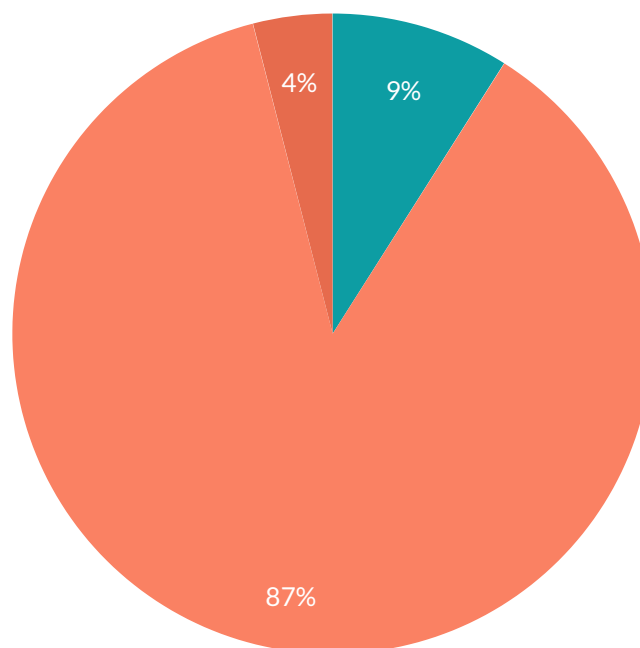
***“Troubled families [funding] should be increased and LA budgets should be increased”***

However, even though they would appreciate more money in their authority they accepted that in a time of reducing resources for local government it would be particularly hard to protect early intervention spending unless it was ring-fenced in some way - even more so after the Covid-19 emergency:

***“If ringfenced budgets for EI are provided to the LA then I would support a reduction in the available programme resources for the TF programme - but if not ringfenced then I would support a similar amount of resource being made available - but with a change to the funding allocation model.”***

***“I would ring fence some early intervention funding and consider introducing some criteria linked to the funding.”***

## QUESTION 5: Do you believe the Troubled Families Programme should be renamed?



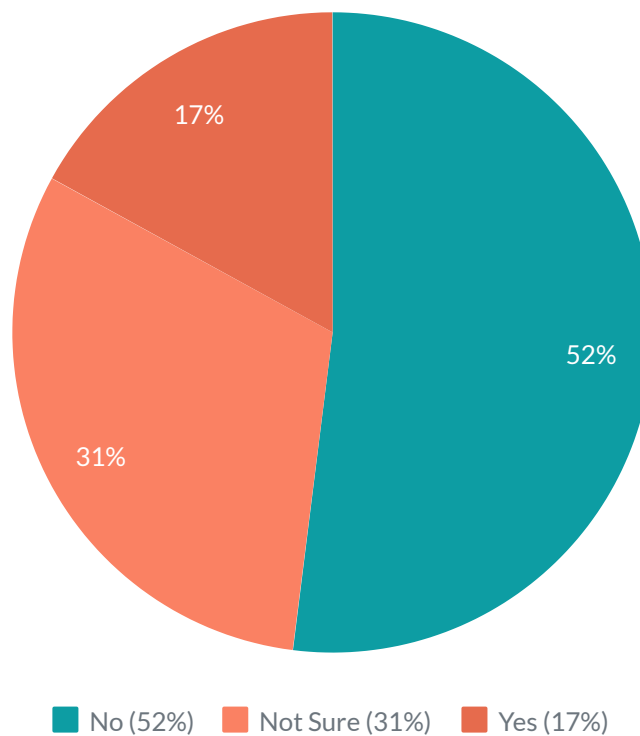
■ No (9%) ■ Yes (87%) ■ Not Sure (4%)



Moving towards how the programme might be reformed going forward member authorities were asked their views on whether the programme should be renamed. 87% of CCN members supported the former MHCLG Secretary of State James Brokenshire's assertion in 2019 that if the programme is continued it might be renamed [8]. A few suggestions for alternative names were put forward with the most popular being 'Strengthening Families' or 'Supporting Families'. The general sentiment, though, was summed up in the succinct quote:

*“Anything other than current name which is highly stigmatising”.*

**QUESTION 6: Do you believe access to the Troubled Families Programme should be extended to the Voluntary Sector to help incentivise it to deliver Preventative/Early Intervention services in your authority?**



As part of potential reforms to any future programme CCN members were asked whether they believed access to the centrally distributed pot of Troubled Families funding should be extended to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) as a means of helping local third sector organisations innovate to provide early intervention services. Half did not think so, with some highlighting the underpinning view that *“the LA is a single point of accountability”* whilst others were not even sure it would be feasible:

*“The current programme and funding model is too bureaucratic to make it pay for the VCS sector. Local areas are already able to find ways of using this funding to increase capacity of the VCS.”*

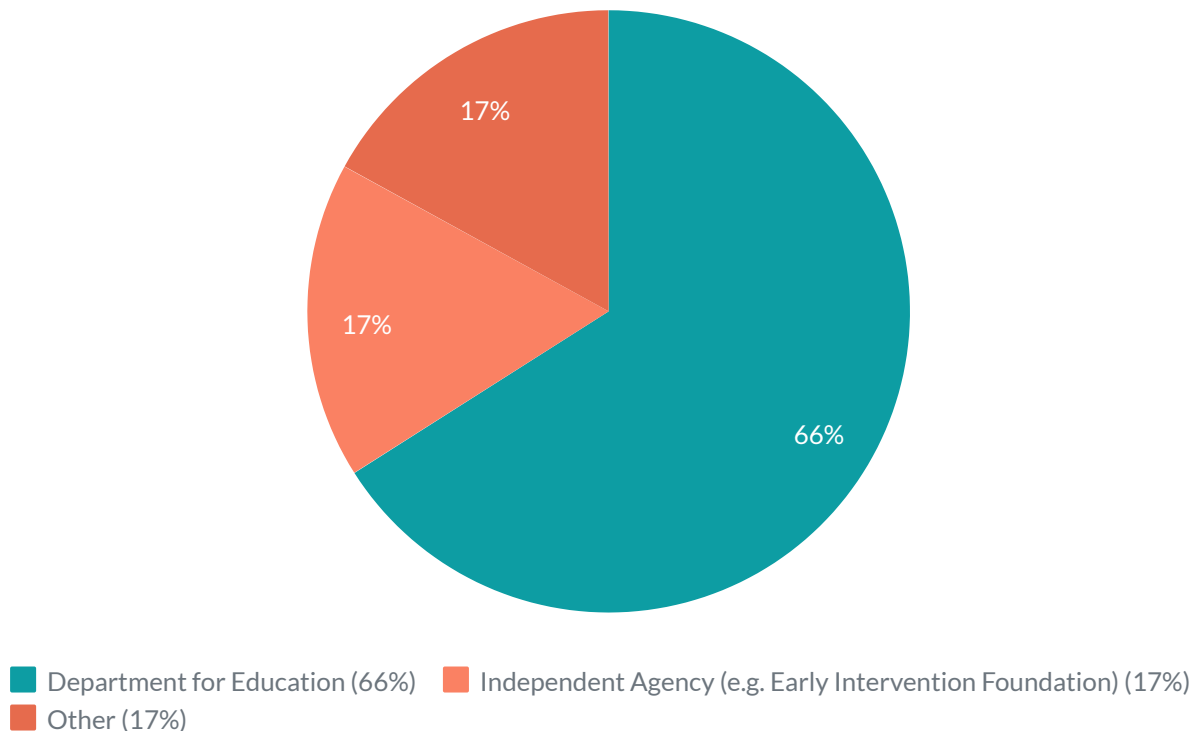
Although others were more circumspect and would consider proposals which perhaps supported Troubled Families funding being made available to the VCS in certain circumstances. However there was still a

[8] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/03/19/labelling-families-troubled-isolates-communities-secretary-says/>

Families funding being made available to the VCS in certain circumstances. However there was still a wariness of potential unforeseen consequences:

*“It would need to be clear how this aligned with activity by the statutory sector and how the VCS is placed to deliver - this could potentially create unhelpful 'competition' to work with families for outcome payments.”*

## QUESTION 7: Which central department/body do you believe should allocate central funding for Early Intervention?



Finally, the survey asked member authorities to consider which government department or organisation should be responsible for allocating central early intervention funding. Two-thirds of respondents felt that DfE would be the best agency to co-ordinate this delivery. The remainder felt either that there should be a cross-departmental approach or that responsibility should lie with a non-government organisation such as the Early Intervention Foundation [9]. No respondent felt any other listed department, including DWP or DHSC, would be most appropriate to perform this role on their own.

*“I would link funding to some form of criteria. Following this approach the EIF may be well placed to co-ordinate funding.”*

*“I would welcome a national conversation that seeks to develop a cross departmental early intervention strategy that is based on evidence of effectiveness with strong financial planning and budget decisions that are based on need.”*

[9] NB – such a role was initially scoped as a potential function for the Early Intervention Foundation in the recommendations made for its establishment in the seminal reports by Graham Allen MP, commissioned by the Coalition Government in 2010 - Allen, G (2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps* (HM Government) and Allen, G (2011) *Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings* (HM Government)

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The full report *Children's Services Funding & Early Intervention* makes a number of key recommendations for both ensuring the efficient and fair funding of Children's Social Care going forward as well as new methods of incentivising early intervention spending through a National Framework for Early Intervention. These recommendations were - and still are - intended by CCN to influence longer-term thinking by the Government for the next Spending Review which was expected in the autumn.

However, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that some of the issues raised by this analysis are now of immediate urgency. This summary report has outlined how as funding for Children's Social Care has decreased over the past five years local authorities have become increasingly reliant on the Troubled Families Programme to support their preventative work with families. As lockdown starts to lift these are the very services which councils will rely on to help support recovery in their communities.

Given lockdown, school closures and social distancing – not to mention the lifting of many statutory reporting duties at local level – it is likely to be very difficult, if not impossible, for any sort of payment-by-results model to operate effectively for 2020/1. Yet as CCN's survey shows the Troubled Families funding is an utterly essential component in maintaining family services at local level and Government needs to think now about how this money can best be mobilised to support families in light of the change circumstances.

At the same time plans for the continuity and future of the work of the programme from 2021/2 across the new decade should begin immediately and be framed fundamentally around helping families to recover from and thrive beyond Covid-19. The name should be changed to be more appealing and less stigmatising – something which may be more easily enhanced if a new project is focussed around recovery from the emergency, given the way it has already brought diverse communities together around a common goal. The funding structures must be reviewed and the aims of the programme be brought in line with the broader aims of community recovery for children and families hit hardest by the emergency.

The report therefore concludes with these following recommendations for Government:

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

Disapply payment-by-results criteria for Troubled Families during 2020/1. Instead distribute this funding directly to all authorities on the existing 'earned autonomy' principle to support local Covid-19 recovery efforts with families.

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

Begin to set out reforms for the Troubled Families programme beyond 2020/1 centred on helping families to recover from the Covid-19 emergency across the medium- to long-term.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

Rename the Troubled Families programme to become less stigmatising and more inclusive as the nature of the families targeted by the programme change due to the impact of Covid-19.

# 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 26 county councils and 10 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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