

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP OF NALC

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and county associations have a key national and local role in promoting, supporting and improving local (parish and town) councils which are the first tier of local government in England. This includes:

- building the local council sector's reputation with principal councils, national organisations and the media;
- engaging with and lobbying the UK Government and parliament;
- identifying and sharing good practice;
- improving the capacity and capability of local councils to do the job;
- providing high-quality advice and guidance, including on legal, finance, planning and other subjects;
- ensuring local councils are aware of upcoming legislation and issues of potential interest to them so they can act accordingly.

Some of the direct benefits of membership for local councils are set out below:

Influencing and policy development

- access to, and direct influence over, a national family of county associations and national body working in partnership together to help local councils provide services to their communities, understand the legal and financial framework in which they work, and provide strong national and county voices to principal councils, the UK Government and in the media.
- lobbying and campaigning for policy and other changes to make the work of councils easier, recent successes include:
 - successfully lobbying against the extension of council tax referendum principles to local councils, a continuing priority as part of our campaign for flexible and secure funding;
 - securing new legislation to exempt public conveniences from business rates, saving local councils millions of pounds;
 - successfully lobbying against the requirement to have a Data Protection Officer under data protection legislation, saving councils millions of pounds;
 - setting up a sector-led independent company – Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Limited – to procure external audit services for local councils to save them significant time and money;
 - successfully slowing the withdrawal of council tax support funding, ensuring over £120 million has been passed on to local councils since 2013;
 - ensuring local councils were not overlooked in the Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper and securing a commitment to review the role and function of local councils and make it easier and quicker to set them up;

- securing £4.7 million from the UK Government for a Transparency Fund over three years to help smaller local councils comply with new transparency rules, with funding provided to local councils and county associations;
- impending regulations to increase the number of people required to trigger a parish poll to reduce vexatious use and save local councils money;
- achieving support for our long-standing policy objective to extend the remit of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to cover local councils;
- promoting and supporting the role of local councils in devolution and local government reform including a dedicated area on the website, free events and networking between county associations and the development of guidance such as Local Government Association (LGA) report Local service delivery and place-shaping: A framework to support parish and town councils;
- ensuring the continuation of grant funding from the UK Government and access to other support and advice for local councils developing neighbourhood plans;
- securing measures in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Neighbourhood Planning Bill 2017 and Planning White Paper to support and strengthen neighbourhood planning;
- ensuring local councils could access some financial support during the Coronavirus pandemic including the job retention scheme, business rates relief and deferment of loan payments.

Advice and guidance

Membership of NALC and your county association gives your council access to up-to-date advice and guidance through member-only access to our website, publications, toolkits and conferences on an extensive range of subjects including devolution, securing external funding, neighbourhood planning, affordable housing, procurement, banking, climate change and using social media; our website had over 625,000 page views last year and over 3,000 people have attended our online events.

Your council will also have access to the following advisory services through your county association:

- Legal - NALCs in house team of solicitors receive hundreds of requests from individual councils submitted by county associations or direct access councils. Requests can be on anything a council is involved in, e.g. employment of staff, ownership of land, meeting procedural questions. On top of the Model Standing Orders for local councils there is a wide range of legal topic notes (LTNs) on a particular subject area (e.g. charity law). There are around 90 LTNs which are regularly reviewed and updated.
- Finance and audit - NALC partner DCK Beavers responds to requests for financial advice, submitted in the same way as legal advice requests. We also work with The

Parkinson Partnership to produce and regularly update the Model Financial Regulations for local councils a well financial briefings on specific topics.

- Employment and HR - NALC has a partnership with Worknest to provide advice and guidance related to employment, HR and health and safety. The membership area of our website has a range of template HR policies and how-to guides, including a template contract of employment. Plus, county associations are able to access an advisory service with experts on employment law, HR and health and safety to support queries from member councils.

Other financial representation and organisations we work with:

- Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG) – NALC hosts and provides the secretariat for JPAG. NALC has one representative on JPAG. The chair alternates between the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA), the Society of Local Council Clerks and NALC. NALC publishes the Practitioners' Guide (updated annually in March) on its website.
- Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) – A NALC representative sits on board of SAAA. SAAA currently procures, appoints, manages and quality assures external auditors for all smaller authorities including all local councils

Improvement and Development

Member councils have access to a range of initiatives to improve your local council and enhance the skills of councillors and clerks, including:

Local Council Award Scheme - The Local Council Award Scheme is NALC's flagship improvement programme. It has been designed to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils and to provide a framework to support all local councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement. NALC ensures that the scheme stays up to date with the standards in the sector and coordinates a national accreditation panel, although some county associations run a local panel. Get in touch with us if you want to find out more about how accreditation works and how we could help promote the scheme in your county.

Publications – NALC produces a wide range of publications. Our most popular publications are our series of Good Councillor guides that can be downloaded as PDFs or by county associations as hard copies using the relevant order form on the publications page of the NALC website. Current guides include:

- Good councillor's guide
- Neighbourhood planning
- Finance and transparency
- Transport planning
- Community business
- Cyber security
- Being a good employer

We also have the following key publications:

- Website accessibility and publishing guidelines
- Digital mapping toolkit

Online learning - NALC hosts an e-learning platform that county associations can access and provide to their members. These courses cover a range of subjects with new content being regularly added. Hundreds of councillors have already used this e-learning opportunity.

Improvement and Development Board - NALC also provides the secretariat to the Improvement and Development Board which aims to support the improvement of the local council sector through bringing a range of national stakeholders together including NALC, SLCC and the Local Government Association. One of the programmes overseen by the IDB is the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). County Associations provide CiLCA training for clerks.

Corporate peer challenge –As part of its work supporting super-councils, NALC is working with the Local Government Association to offer the opportunity to benefit from a corporate peer challenge. Corporate peer challenges are designed to support councils in benchmarking where they are against other similar councils, to identify areas where it is performing well along with areas for improvement, and to then put together and implement an action plan for the council.

Other initiatives:

We work responsively to the needs of our members and will undertake projects and initiatives based on those needs. Most recently these include:

Civility and Respect - Throughout the sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the [Civility and Respect Project](#). This includes the Civility and Respect Pledge which has been signed by over 1,000 councils in its first year

Digital technologies - We have an increasing amount of guidance in this area including guides to website accessibility and cyber security, with more to come!

Partnerships - NALC has a number of [partnerships](#) which help us provide additional benefits to our members. They play a vital role in supporting our work, providing specialist products and services to save our members time and money. Like us, our partners are committed to improving local areas and helping communities help themselves.

Networks – We coordinate several new national networks on the climate emergency, coastal communities and super-councils, as well as for women, LGBT+ and young councillors.