

A Councillor's Guide to Community Call for Action

What is it?

And, what will it mean for you, as a Councillor, in Kirklees?

What is a CCfA?

CCfA is a process which puts you as local councillors at the forefront of dealing with issues of concern in your local communities. It gives you a central role in calling to account the work of council services and other agencies at a local level. When concerns are identified (either as a result of information from individuals, community groups or your own observations), councillors should be able to trigger a response from service providers and help ensure the concerns are dealt with. **As a last resort**, when a problem cannot be solved, the CCfA can enable you to trigger a local scrutiny review.

The CCfA, alongside proposals which will require a much wider range of agencies to formally cooperate with scrutiny in the future, is intended to provide greater emphasis to the vital work undertaken by you in your communities as community advocates and champions, and to further increase the accountability of public service providers to local communities.

Where does the idea come from?

In Kirklees, a council budget amendment provided additional resources for Scrutiny to 'review local service provision.' The Kirklees CCfA has been developed in response to this budget amendment which has enabled the introduction of a CCfA in advance of it being a legal requirement (the first Council nationally to do so)



The Police and Justice Act will introduce a CCfA in relation to community safety. Several other Government departments are also exploring proposals. It is likely to be a requirement for all councils to introduce these CCfA processes in 2008. In the Local Government White Paper, 'Strong and prosperous communities,' the Minister for Communities and Local Government said:

"Local communities are represented by their democratically elected councillors. We want to strengthen the ability of local councillors to speak up for their communities and demand an answer when things go wrong. We propose that this role should be exercised by individual councillors through a '**Community Call for Action**' or collectively by councillors through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

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Update on developments at a national level

Nationally, the thinking about CCfA has shifted quite significantly over the past year, with less emphasis now on scrutiny's role and more emphasis on local ward councillors to deal with issues of concern, with scrutiny seen as a tool of last resort.

The concept and procedure for CCfA referred to in the White Paper is largely the same as in the Police and Justice Act, that is:

- **Community Call for Action (CCfA):** Local residents have concerns about persistent or serious problems in their area or want to influence policies.
- **First level of response:** Councillor takes up communities concerns. (Councillors may also initiate a CCfA and gather support from the local community.)
- **Second level of response:** Councillor asks Council Executive to take action.
- **Third level of response:** Councillor asks Overview and Scrutiny to investigate.
- **Fourth level of response:** The Overview and Scrutiny committee considers rejects or makes recommendations – which may be accepted or rejected by the council executive/local partners.



Phase 1: First locality

The first phase of the CCfA in Kirklees will start on 13th February 2007 in the localities of Huddersfield North and Huddersfield South. Introducing the CCfA in only two localities initially will make it easier to test out the approach and to evaluate learning points in relation to each stage of the process before the CCfA is rolled out Kirklees-wide. We may need to tailor this approach in the future to take account of any developments at a national level.

How will a Community Call for Action (CCfA) fit in with 'Scrutiny'?

In Kirklees, members of the public, ward councillors or community groups can already request the Scrutiny process to review an issue of concern.

A large proportion of the in-depth ad hoc scrutiny reviews carried out in Kirklees have originated from public requests for scrutiny.

One of the roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is to consider requests for scrutiny and to prioritise issues for review. The CCfA will **not** change this.

What's new about the CCfA?

What distinguishes the CCfA from a more general request for scrutiny is:

- The focus of the CCfA is on **neighbourhood** or **locality** issues and specifically the **quality** of public service provision at a locality level.
- The CCfA represents a genuine local **community** concern (based on local councillors judgements) and
- It is a **persistent** problem which the local councillor has been **unable to resolve** through local action and discussion with the cabinet or relevant services and agencies.
- When introduced as a legal requirement (expected April 2008), councillors will be under a **legal duty** to consider requests from members of the public on certain issues.
- Scrutiny reviews resulting from CCfA will be undertaken by scrutiny panels composed largely of councillors from the affected locality. There is an expectation that the **locality-based scrutiny reviews** will be 'short and sharp', focused reviews - it is important that the public see this as a responsive and un-bureaucratic process which delivers tangible outcomes.

What the CCfA is not

We have always rightly emphasised that scrutiny is not appropriate for dealing with individual complaints. The council and partner agencies have well established complaints mechanisms for this purpose. In responding to public requests for CCfA, local councillors will need to make a judgement about whether the issue is a potential CCfA or should be dealt with in another way.

A new post of 'Scrutiny Assistant' has been established in the Overview and Scrutiny Team. One of the Scrutiny Assistant's roles is to provide members of the public with personal advice at an early stage in a CCfA request - in order to help people through the process or ensure they are signposted to other mechanisms if CCfA is not appropriate.

How will it work in practice?

The CCfA process being adopted for the first phase of the CCfA is summarised on the following flow-chart. Some important parts of the process to consider include:

When does a request from a member of the public become a potential CCfA?

Councillors deal with issues of concern on behalf of their constituents as an everyday part of their usual business. The CCfA is not intended to add additional bureaucracy to these ward councillor requests, which will continue to be dealt with in the same way as they are now. If you are uncertain about whether a request might be appropriate, the Scrutiny Assistant can provide advice and assistance to councillors and to the member of the public making the request.

Championing a CCfA

It is a matter of judgement which requests you agree to champion and as a local councillor you are accountable to your local community for these judgements. Championing a request will mean taking the issue up on behalf of the resident(s) concerned and trying to resolve the problem by liaising with council services, the Cabinet and/or outside agencies.

Logging CCfA requests

You may wish to inform the Scrutiny Office about a request for a potential CCfA at quite an early stage, particularly if support and advice from the Scrutiny Assistant would be helpful. Certainly at the point you agree to champion a CCfA it would be helpful to formally log this with the Scrutiny Office. Some requests will come to the Scrutiny Office directly, and in those cases we will log the request and forward the information to the appropriate ward councillors.

Referring CCfA's to scrutiny

The expectation is that only the most persistent issues, which local councillors have not been able to resolve will be referred to scrutiny. In considering the referral, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will want to be assured that ward councillors have made every effort to try to find a local resolution.

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Information available:

Informal report to O&S Management Committee 18th October 2006

Informal report to O&S Management Committee 02nd January 2007

Report to O&S Management Committee 13th February 2007

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SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED CCfA MECHANISM

