

WARM UP

1 What can you remember about the structure of the UK government?

LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES - UK

In most of England, there are two levels of local government:

- **county council**, which covers large areas and provides most public services, including schools, social services, and public transportation;
- **district council**, which covers smaller areas within a county and provides more local services, including council housing, leisure facilities, local planning, recycling and rubbish collection.

In most large towns and cities, and in some small counties, there will be just one level of local government responsible for all local services. These are called a '**unitary authority**'. In London, each borough is a unitary authority, but the Greater London Authority is responsible for certain services like transport and police across all of London. In Scotland and Wales, there is a unitary system with one level of local government. In Northern Ireland there are local councils, but most services are carried out by other organisations. In some parts of England there is sometimes a third level of local government, formed by **town councils and parish councils**. In Wales, they are called 'community councils'. They cover a very small area and are responsible for services like parks and ponds, war memorials, and local halls and community centres. In Scotland there are community councils with fewer powers but there is no equivalent in Northern Ireland.

Local authorities work within the powers established with various Acts of Parliament. Some of their functions are mandatory, which means that the authority must do what is required by law, while others are discretionary, allowing an authority to provide services if it wishes. Local government spending is about a quarter of all public spending in the UK. Local authorities are funded by a combination of grants from central government, Council Tax (paid by households depending on the value of their home) and business rates (property tax on businesses).



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ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text about the local governmental structures and complete the table below.

<p>_____ COUNCIL (large area) Responsible for: _____</p>	<p>UNITARY AUTHORITY (in large _____ and in small counties) Responsible for: _____ London boroughs, Scotland and _____ have this system.</p>
<p>_____ COUNCIL (smaller areas) Responsible for: _____</p>	
<p>_____ / _____ COUNCIL (very small area) Responsible for: _____</p>	
<p>POWERS AND FUNDING Some powers are mandatory and dictated by _____; others are at the discretion of the local authority. Funds from: _____, _____, _____</p>	

SPEAKING

3 Discuss these questions in small groups.

- How is local government structured in your country?
- What services does local government provide?
- How are local government authorities funded?
- What are the major similarities/differences with the UK system?