

POLICY DIGEST, October 2015

This digest presents a summary of the latest policy developments at a national and regional level of strategic relevance to Northumberland and highlights Government announcements of relevance to local government. This issue covers period from Monday 5 October to Friday 30 October. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
<p>Chancellor unveils ‘devolution revolution’ (5 October 2015)</p> <p>George Osborne has set out major plans to devolve new powers from Whitehall to local areas to promote growth and prosperity. By the end of the Parliament, local government will be able to retain 100 per cent of local taxes – including all £26 billion of revenue from business rates – to spend on local government services. Fixing the current broken system of financing local government will be a huge boost to local growth, help attract business and create jobs. The government will also abolish the Uniform Business Rate and give local authorities the power to cut business rates to boost enterprise and economic activity in their areas. Local areas which successfully promote growth and attract businesses will keep all of the benefit from increased business rate revenues. At the same time, the core grant from Whitehall will be phased out, and local government will take on new responsibilities. Those areas which choose to have city-wide elected mayors will get even greater flexibilities, also being given the power to increase rates for spending on local infrastructure projects, as long as they win the support of local business.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-unveils-devolution-revolution</p>	For information	
PLACE SHAPING		
<p>Historic agreement will extend Right to Buy to 1.3 million more tenants (7 October 2015)</p> <p>The Prime Minister has announced a historic new agreement with housing associations and the National Housing Federation that will extend the Right to Buy to 1.3 million more families across the country. The Right to Buy has already helped 2 million families to realise their dream of owning a home. Because all of the funds from selling off properties will be recycled toward replacement affordable properties, the proposals will not only increase home ownership, but help those who need a new affordable property, and boost overall housing supply.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-agreement-will-extend-right-to-buy-to-13-million-more-tenants</p>	For information	Kevin Lowry, Director of Local Services and Housing

<p>Historic Housing and Planning Bill will transform generation rent into generation buy (13 October 2015)</p> <p>The government's new Housing and Planning Bill marks the start of a national crusade to transform generation rent into generation buy, Housing Minister Brandon Lewis has announced. The minister said today's publication sent a clear signal that the government would keep the country building while giving hard-working families every opportunity to unlock the door to home ownership. Measures include: a new legal duty will be placed on councils to guarantee the provision of 200,000 Starter Homes on all reasonably sized new development sites; providing the government with targeted powers to ensure that all councils get Local Plans in place by 2017; ensuring that those tenants on higher incomes who are living in social housing have a rent that reflects their ability to pay, while those who genuinely need support continue to receive it; and automatic planning permission in principle on brownfield sites – to bring forward more land to build new homes quicker, while protecting the green belt.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-agreement-will-extend-right-to-buy-to-13-million-more-tenants</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Country roads revealed as Britain's deadliest (22 October 2015)</p> <p>New figures from the Department for Transport reveal that country roads are the deadliest, with an average of 3 people dying on them every day last year. In total, 1,040 people were killed and 9,051 seriously injured on country roads in 2014, with a third (348) of fatalities occurring on a bend. In spite of this, almost a quarter of road users surveyed admit to braking too late on bends and two fifths (41%) claimed to have swerved to avoid something in the road. The problem is most acute among young drivers, with a third confessing to braking too late before a bend and more than 1 in 10 admitting to 'taking the racing line' by crossing into the opposite side of the road to take a turn faster. Young drivers are also the most likely age group to overtake on a bend without a clear road ahead. In response, THINK! is today launching a new country roads campaign. THINK! has partnered with a farmer to turn potential road hazards into impossible-to-ignore warning signs. 'Helpful hazards' features animals and vehicles sprayed with helpful signs prompting drivers to slow down, anticipate hazards and brake before the bend, not on it.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/country-roads-revealed-as-britains-deadliest</p>	For information	David Laux, Head of Technical Services
<p>Infrastructure at heart of Spending Review as Chancellor launches National Infrastructure Commission (30 October 2015)</p> <p>Chancellor George Osborne has insisted better infrastructure is vital to improve the lives of British people as he commits to £100 billion of spending in this Parliament for new roads, rail, flood defences and other vital projects. Launching the new National Infrastructure Commission, led by former Cabinet minister Lord Adonis, the Chancellor will set out plans to 'get Britain building', saying that infrastructure will be at the heart of next month's Spending Review. In his statement, he will pledge £100 billion in infrastructure spending by 2020 – including full funding for the £15 billion Roads Investment Strategy. A suite of asset sales which the Treasury expects to raise billions of pounds is being identified to be ploughed back into infrastructure projects, with more details to be announced at the Spending Review.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infrastructure-at-heart-of-spending-review-as-chancellor-launches-national-infrastructure-commission</p>	For information	

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>The state of the North 2015: Four tests for the northern powerhouse</p> <p>This year, IPPR North's annual State of the North report looks to the long-term future and asks a simple question: How will we know whether the 'northern powerhouse' is working? This report assesses the state of the North as it is, but also what it could, and should, aspire to become. It presents an analysis of the North's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Standard economic metrics such as levels of economic growth and productivity paint an important picture. Yet they don't necessarily paint the full picture; neither are they always entirely helpful in planning for the future. For this reason, this report presents four tests for the northern powerhouse that are designed to promote the idea that with greater control over economic development, the north of England can nurture a more equal, resilient and sustainable economy.</p> <p>http://www.ippr.org/publications/the-state-of-the-north-2015</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>£138 million available for local communities to grow UK's rural economy (14 October 2015)</p> <p>Rural communities across the UK will have access to £138 million to create more jobs and boost the rural economy, Farming Minister George Eustice has announced. The approach, known as LEADER, will give local communities power to support projects in their own area, building on the Government's devolution commitments under its Rural Productivity Plan. Projects previously funded include villages benefiting from heritage funding to boost tourism, farmers diversifying into farm shops, ice cream parlours and camping sites and local food producers of cheese and meats supported to expand their product lines. Rural Northumberland is covered by three LEADER areas – Coast and Lowlands, Uplands, and Pennine Dales.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/138-million-available-for-local-communities-to-grow-uks-rural-economy</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Services
<p>North East joins the unstoppable momentum of Northern Powerhouse (23 October 2015)</p> <p>Chancellor George Osborne hailed the 'unstoppable momentum' in the drive to strike devolution deals with cities and regions, as the North East became the latest area to make a historic agreement with the government to take on new powers. The agreement delivers another significant boost to the Northern Powerhouse as the Chancellor signed a deal with the North East Combined Authority. Voters in the North East will now choose a directly elected Mayor in 2017, who will take on a raft of new powers as part of plans to take power out of Whitehall and hand it back to local people. The deal presents a significant financial boost for the North East who will receive £30 million a year over the next 30 years, enabling the region to compete in international markets with a new Investment Fund being set up thanks to a guaranteed £900 million from the government. The new Mayor in the North East will oversee a range of powers devolved from government and the Chancellor announced recently that Mayors will also have the power, if they have the support of the local business community, to raise business rates to help fund new infrastructure, enabling them to build for their city's future. The North East deal provides for the transfer of significant powers over transport, strategic planning, employment and skills from central government to the region and it paves the way for further devolution over time, and for the reform of public services, including potentially health and social care, to be led by the North East.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/north-east-joins-the-unstoppable-momentum-of-northern-powerhouse</p>	For information	Steven Mason, Chief Executive

HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>The role of the National Data Guardian for health and social care</p> <p>This Government consultation seeks views on the responsibilities of the statutory National Data Guardian for health and social care. The responses will form a major part of the development for more detailed proposals to establish the National Data Guardian for health and social care on a statutory footing. The National Data Guardian for health and social care will help to ensure that personal confidential data is held and used to support better outcomes from health and care services, at the same time providing confidence that there are thorough safeguards in place to protect personal confidential data. The consultation closes on 17 December 2015.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-role-of-the-national-data-guardian-for-health-and-social-care</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation	Jane Bowie, Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning
<p>Lord Carter: reducing variation in care could save NHS £5 billion (21 October 2015)</p> <p>Hospitals can save around £5 billion by reducing variation in care and improving the way they care for patients, Lord Carter has said. The call is part of Lord Carter's review into how savings can be made by the NHS, which aims to help local NHS chief executives make their hospitals safer and more efficient at the same time. For the first time, the activity carried out by all NHS hospitals has been reviewed together and broken down by clinical specialty. The results show huge variations in clinical costs, infection rates, readmission rates, litigation payments and device and procedure selection. The review has highlighted the huge opportunity for hospitals to tackle these variations.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-carter-reducing-variation-in-care-could-save-nhs-5-billion</p>	For information	
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p>Record number of families helped by adoption support fund (20 October 2015)</p> <p>Thousands of adoptive families are now accessing essential therapy services to help their children close the door on previous traumatic experiences and settle into their new life - backed by £7 million of government investment. Since the introduction of the fund in April 2015 - the most significant reform to adoption support in a generation - applications have been made by every single council the length and breadth of the country. And to make sure families get the support they need, when they need it, the government has unveiled a new coalition of adoption champions, who will advise - and challenge - ministers on how help and support for families can be improved. The group will bring together experienced adoptive parents who are determined to make a difference in shaping adoption services both locally and nationally, putting their knowledge and experience to good use for those families on the start of their adoptive journey.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-number-of-families-helped-by-adoption-support-fund</p>	For information	Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Safeguarding

<p>Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools</p> <p>The Government has launched a consultation on proposals to speed up the transformation of failing schools and schools that are deemed to be 'coasting' - delivering on the government's commitment to extend opportunity and ensure all children are supported to reach their full potential. The tough new powers, first put forward by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan in the Education and Adoption Bill in June, will allow the government to swiftly intervene and turn around failing schools. The measures will sweep away the bureaucracy previously exploited by opponents with ideological objections who could delay or obstruct the process by which academy sponsors take over to improve the running of schools. In some cases, campaigners have delayed intervention by drawing out debates, refusing to provide important information and blocking vital decisions. Schools also eligible for intervention will be those which fall within a new definition of 'coasting' where performance data shows that, year on year, they are failing to ensure their pupils reach their potential. Unlike failing schools, where there is no question that swift intervention is required, coasting schools will be offered help. The consultation seeks views on the proposed definition of a mainstream school which is coasting as well as the options for developing a coasting definition for special schools and for pupil referral units. The consultation closes on 18 December 2015.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/have-your-say-on-measures-to-transform-failing-schools</p>	<p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation</p>	<p>Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills</p>
<p>Children's residential care review to transform lives (28 October 2015)</p> <p>The Prime Minister, David Cameron and Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan have announced a comprehensive review into children's residential care to help put an end to a life of disadvantage for some of the most vulnerable children in care. There are currently over 8,000 children and young people in children's homes up and down the country, with councils spending over £1 billion a year. Yet these vulnerable children are less likely to do well at school, more likely to be absent or excluded, and more likely to take part in risky behaviour than their classmates - in part because of the past neglect and abuse they have suffered, and at a great cost to the taxpayer. The independent review - headed up by Sir Martin Narey, former Head of the Prison and Probation Services in England and Wales and CEO of children's charity Barnardo's - will look at which children should be in residential care, how it can be improved and how government can achieve the very best for every single child in their care.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childrens-residential-care-review-to-transform-lives</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Safeguarding</p>



Policy Digest is produced on 4 to 6 weekly cycle by the Council's Economic and Inclusion Policy Team within the Planning and Economy Directorate
 All issues are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy