

# *who runs the north east . . . now?*


*A Review  
and Assessment of Governance  
in North East England*

*Fred Robinson*

*Keith Shaw*

*Jill Dutton*

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*Sarah Williams*

**June 2000**



UNIVERSITY of  NORTHUMBRIA at NEWCASTLE

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## FOREWORD

At their meeting in November 1998, the trustees of the Millfield House Foundation were glad to receive an application from Fred Robinson for an investigation into the machinery of government in the North East of England. One of us, as a trustee of the Joseph Rowntree charitable Trust, had taken part in that body's decision in the late 1980s to develop a major programme of grants to examine the nature and extent of democracy in Britain, including ways in which it might be safeguarded and enhanced. We were conscious of the importance, for all those who live and work in the North East, of the major institutional changes that have taken place under successive governments and look set to continue. The *prospect* of effective devolution to the English regions adds a note of urgency. We were already aware of Fred Robinson's work in the region, having earlier initiated and jointly funded a book on 'Post Industrial Tyneside' (1988), which he edited and in part wrote.

The present volume breaks new ground in assembling and presenting the facts about the plethora of public sector bodies in a single region. It provides a clear and comprehensive picture of the purposes, structure and control of bodies whose activities affect the wellbeing of all of us. It will become indispensable to all who are involved in these bodies, transact with them, or are affected by their actions or inaction.

It might be thought that government itself should take responsibility for a compendium such as this one. Openness and accountability, after all, are key attributes of good democratic government. Yet much of the information has been hard to track down and dig up. Now that this work has been done, I hope that the public sector will take on the task of keeping it up to date.

With this volume as a model, it may also be hoped that the initiative will be followed in the other eight English regions. The primary benefit will be to individuals and organisations in each of them, but replication might also make possible useful comparisons and contrasts between the regions.

Other developments also suggest themselves. The present work is admirably informative and lucid, but the authors have reined in the temptation to explore the implications of what they have found. There ought to be wide discussion of these implications.

Moreover, society is wider than the public sector. The National Lottery distributing bodies now have considerable influence but have had to be excluded from this study. The media - the 'Fourth Estate' - are largely privately controlled but an important element in the polity. The same applies to the multitude of bodies which make up the voluntary sector - now represented at regional level here by the Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE). The 'social partners' - business and organised workers - also have regional institutions which are amongst those which 'run the North East'.

The present volume should stimulate such widening and deepening but will itself remain the centre-piece for study and reference. I commend it to all concerned with our common life in this region.

Grigor McClelland  
Trustee, Millfield House Foundation  
June 2000

## PREFACE

In the mid-1990s, there was widespread concern about the proliferation of 'quangos', unelected bodies in charge of public services. These 'quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations' are run by people appointed by government ministers and are not accountable to the public. Operating secretly and based on patronage, quangos became associated with scandal and sleaze, and this 'appointed state' was generally considered to have produced a serious 'democratic deficit' in Britain.

The quangos remain - and are still a real cause for concern. But conditions have changed and the debate has moved on. Efforts have been made to raise standards in political and public life; constitutional changes have been introduced; and there will soon be new legislation (albeit limited) concerning Freedom of Information. And now, debate about the democratic deficit extends well beyond quangos; it encompasses fundamental issues about governance and the quality of our democracy. It is not sufficient simply to attack the anti-democratic appointed state; it is also necessary to consider the nature and accountability of the elected state.

Five years ago, we produced a report on quangos in the north of England, which looked at Urban Development Corporations, Training and Enterprise Councils, and quangos in the National Health Service. Although that was a limited exercise, it received a good deal of publicity because it provided information - especially about *who* runs the region's quangos - which had been largely hidden from view. Moreover, it connected with national concerns and campaigns.

When we thought about looking again at these issues, it was apparent that a new study would have to have a much broader scope. It would have to range across the elected as well as the unelected state, while still retaining a focus on who is in charge and exploring the nature and characteristics of contemporary governance. As in the previous study, the intention would be to render the invisible visible, to prompt awkward questions and, ultimately, help to stimulate the development of a better democracy.

We submitted a proposal and application for funding to support this study to the Millfield House Foundation, a charitable trust based in Newcastle upon Tyne. The Foundation accepted the proposal with enthusiasm. Our first acknowledgement is therefore to them, and particularly to Grigor McClelland, one of the trustees, and Terence Finley, the administrator.

It should be said that we underestimated, by a long way, the amount of work that would be involved. Covering such a range of activities and organisations was far from easy. Some organisations were reluctant or slow to provide the basic information we required. At least this time, fewer of them demanded to know why we wanted to know who runs their organisation - this seemed indicative of a change, an awareness that it is now less acceptable to try to avoid giving such (basic) information. Nevertheless, some did not complete our simple questionnaire and we recall some examples of intransigence - for example, it took one educational institution two weeks and four phone calls from us to agree just to provide a list of members of their governing body.

We are grateful to all who did provide information, even when the answers to our questions - on the gender composition of their Boards or public access to meetings, for example - might be considered uncomfortable, even embarrassing. We would also like to thank the individuals, in a number of organisations, who kindly checked drafts of chapters in the report. Special thanks are due to Heather Fenwick who typed successive drafts, dealt with numerous amendments and prepared the report for publication.

Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, but any remaining errors of fact or interpretation are, of course, the responsibility of the authors. In a work such as this, there is a problem of dealing with continuing change and we would be pleased to receive updated and new information and amendments (contact Fred Robinson at the address given in the publication details). *We would also like to hear from anyone interested in supporting further editions of this work.* We are mindful that such an exercise soon becomes out of date

and it needs to be regularly repeated if it is to retain its usefulness. It seems to us that regular publication, now made easy on the Internet, would keep the work relevant and the issues it raises alive.

Finally, we hope that those who read the report will find it interesting, useful and thought-provoking. Much of the information we obtained certainly interested, surprised and provoked us.

## THE AUTHORS

The following researchers, from the Universities of Durham and Northumbria, undertook the work on this study. In accordance with the aims of the research, their involvement in public life is noted below.

**Dr Fred Robinson** is a Research Lecturer at the Department of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Durham and Visiting Professor at the University of Northumbria. He led the research, wrote several of the chapters and edited the report. Fred is a member of the management committees of three voluntary sector organisations: Waddington Street Centre, Durham; North Eastern Prison After Care Society; and the Churches' Regional Commission in the North East.

**Dr Keith Shaw** is Principal Lecturer in Government and Research Partner at the Sustainable Cities Research Institute at the University of Northumbria. Keith undertook the research on patterns and processes of governance, regional governance and regeneration partnerships. He also helped to edit the report. He is a governor at the Duchess's Community High School in Alnwick, Northumberland.

**Jill Dutton** is currently completing her PhD thesis on self-employment at the Department of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Durham. She is also a part-time tutor in social science at the University. Jill assisted with the work on arts and culture and local government.

**Paul Grainger** is a Senior Lecturer in Housing at the Department of the Built Environment, University of Northumbria. Paul researched and wrote the chapter on housing associations in the North East. He was formerly a Housing Manager and has worked in three local authorities in the North East (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and South Tyneside).

**Bill Hopwood** is a Research Assistant at the Sustainable Cities Research Institute, University of Northumbria and undertook the

work on governance in education. Bill was an unsuccessful candidate in the Newcastle City Council elections in May 2000.

**Sarah Williams** was formerly a Research Assistant at the Sustainable Cities Research Institute, University of Northumbria and is now a consultant with Crime Concern, based in Woking, Surrey. While at the Institute, Sarah assembled some of the initial information and worked on the chapter on Training and Enterprise Councils.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to answer the question: who runs the North East...now? It is an analysis of power, control and responsibility, focusing on one region, the North East of England.<sup>1</sup> Our principal aim is to reveal *who* is in charge of the region's affairs.

The question can yield a variety of answers. It can be said that the North East is governed by the operation of global market forces and therefore is 'run' by the Board members of multinational corporations and their satellites. From another perspective, the region is controlled by central government and its institutions, politicians in Westminster and civil servants in Whitehall. But both of these formulations – big business and central government – largely ignore the organisations and institutions *within* the region. The question is further complicated when the nature and realities of power are given more consideration. Bearing in mind institutional hierarchies and relationships, layers of power and networks of influences, who actually exercises real power and takes the key decisions affecting the North East?

This study is concerned with those public institutions responsible for providing public services and spending taxpayers' money in the North East. Inevitably it is a limited exercise – in particular, it does not analyse organisations in the private and voluntary sectors contracted to deliver public services - but it goes much further than our previous study, conducted five years ago, which only looked at some of the region's quangos.<sup>2</sup> This time, we investigate the nature of the elected, as well as the unelected state. The analysis presented here breaks new ground. As far as we are aware, no other part of the UK has been subject to such a wide-ranging study of governance.

## **Aims and objectives**

An exploration of governance and its complexities has to go well beyond lists of people serving on public bodies: it is important to establish the context, look at what institutions do, and consider the legitimacy of the various processes of governance. The

study thus aims not only to specify who governs, but also how and why.

There is considerable academic interest in governance and this empirically-based study is intended to add to existing knowledge and research. In particular, we hope it will complement the 'democratic audit' undertaken by Weir and Beetham, work on the 'appointed state' by Skelcher, and research by Stoker and others on 'British local governance'.<sup>3</sup> We regard our study as work in progress – and hope that it will serve as a stepping stone for other researchers to investigate further the governance of public institutions in North East England and in other parts of the UK. Much more needs to be done to explore the realities of power in the North East and elsewhere. For example, how much power do non-executive members of Boards really have? What do they consider their role to be? Is most power really held by executive staff? By providing the basic information about the structures of governance, we hope this study inspires others to delve deeper.

There is growing public awareness about issues of governance, power and democracy. In particular, there is considerable interest in *who* is in charge. Most people may not vote in local elections, but nevertheless have opinions about institutions and the people who run them. A major objective of this study is to provide evidence to stimulate more informed discussion, moving beyond easy clichés and prejudices. The public needs information in order effectively to question and challenge – and also to be able to recognise the contributions that individuals make to running public services. We hope that this report will be a useful reference document for those who wish to know more about how different organisations operate and how they are governed. In addition, it should also be of use to those involved in running the region and trying to understand its institutional arrangements. Most of the information is not easy to find – it has taken several months to assemble – and some of the institutions are little known and little understood. This report brings the information together, for the first time, in one place.

The North East's institutions – such as schools, local councils, police authorities and health

services – rely upon the time and effort put in by ‘active citizens’. Some of them are elected, others appointed; some are paid, many are unpaid for their work in helping to run the region’s services. We recognise those efforts and acknowledge these contributions to public life and service. Criticism of, for example, the gender balance (or, often, lack of it) on councils and Boards, does not detract from that; rather, it is hoped that revealing weaknesses leads to action to improve the quality of institutions. Furthermore, One of our objectives in producing this report is to indicate some of the opportunities there are for individuals to get involved and make a contribution; for those potentially ‘active citizens’ considering how they might help to run the North East, this report could serve as a resource and guide.

While undertaking the research for this study, we have continually been reminded of changes and developments which make it particularly timely.

First, the study appears at a point three years into the Labour government – a period which has seen some important changes which have rendered existing ‘maps’ of the institutional landscape out of date. So the study takes stock of where we are now and looks at the nature and state of governance at this point, a year or so before the next General Election.

Second, the government has a commitment to constitutional change and ‘democratic renewal’. There are now important debates about the composition of the reformed House of Lords, for example, and – especially in the North East – about regional devolution. It is hoped that this study will sharpen debate, especially about the possibilities and prospects for regional government. Better governance requires careful consideration of options and an understanding of realities; it also requires more awareness of how our systems work. Moreover, as well as helping to promote clearer understanding amongst the existing electorate, this study could also provide material for education in ‘citizenship’ which becomes a compulsory part of the schools curriculum in 2002 – education which subsequently might help encourage more participation in the political process and

greater involvement in running the region in the future.

A third element, linked to democratic renewal, is the current drive to introduce improvements to the ways in which institutions work. Local government, in particular, is under pressure to ‘modernise’ its activities and operation. This study notes developments in implementing the ‘modernisation agenda’ and also points to examples of good practice, such as ways of encouraging and supporting the involvement of the public in decision-making and in overseeing what public institutions do.

## Methods

Surprisingly little information about the composition and, in some cases, even the names of people who run the region’s institutions is collected and held centrally. For example, the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast, is unable to supply a list of even the Chairs of local regeneration partnerships which it funds. The government has a ‘quango website’,<sup>4</sup> but this includes few local or regional quangos and the directory of appointees it provides is *several years* out of date. Some organisations do not publish the names of those who run them, and if they do, give no background information about them. In many cases, their annual reports say little about governance and are not widely circulated to those using the services of these institutions, let alone the general public.

Consequently, for most of the public institutions examined in this study, it was necessary to send out questionnaires. The questionnaire survey, designed to relate to each of the various sectors, contained straightforward questions about the members of the Board or its equivalent and processes and practices of governance. Most, but by no means all, responded and this information forms an important part of the report. This was supplemented by information from annual reports, press releases and press coverage, websites, directories and direct requests for information from organisations and individuals. There are, inevitably, some gaps. In addition, there is some unevenness in the accounts since we have succeeded in obtaining more information about some sectors than others. We also chose to go into greater depth and detail in the analysis of the larger

organisations so that, in most cases, their full Board membership is presented. For some, such as schools, we have described simply the structure of governance and for others have listed the Chairs or, in the case of local authorities, the leaders. It may be that, if this exercise develops further, more information will be made available on a website; and this could extend the scope, as well as detail, of the work and make it more accessible.

Each of the accounts of the various institutional sectors focuses on who runs them, how individuals are elected or appointed, their responsibilities and whether they receive remuneration. There is discussion of the main activities and functions of these organisations, their structures, openness and accountability. Key issues are highlighted and reference is made to proposed developments. The study obviously is a 'snapshot' of who runs the North East now. *Most of the information was collected in late 1999 and early 2000.* It will become dated. We therefore hope that the exercise can be repeated and perhaps extended in the future. Ideally, the information should be continually updated, be made freely available on the Internet, and form the basis for regular monitoring of organisations and who runs them.

### Structure of the report

Chapter 2 provides a context for the study. There is a discussion about the nature and forms of contemporary governance and the distribution of power in a complex society. This Chapter serves as a justification and basis for the research.

The subsequent eleven Chapters present the findings, starting with elected government: Parliament and Government (Chapter 3), the European Union (Chapter 4) and Local Government (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 looks at the new institutions of regional governance in the North East. This is followed by an examination of key public services and organisations in the region: the NHS (Chapter 7), Education (Chapter 8), Police Authorities (Chapter 9), Regeneration Partnerships (Chapter 10), Training and Enterprise Councils (Chapter 11), Housing Associations (Chapter 12) and Northern Arts and Culture North East

(Chapter 13). Lists of people serving on these organisations are mainly presented in Annexes at the end of each of the chapters. The results of the study and reflections on the findings are presented in Chapter 14. This highlights the main issues and puts forward an agenda for reform.

<sup>1</sup>The North East of England comprises the counties of Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Durham and Cleveland. The region has a population of 2.6 million, concentrated in the conurbations of Tyneside and Wearside and, to the south, Teesside. The region's administrative centre is Newcastle upon Tyne.

<sup>2</sup>F. Robinson and K. Shaw (1994) *Who Runs the North?* This study was commissioned and published by the trade union UNISON.

<sup>3</sup>S. Weir and D. Beetham (1999) *Political Power and Democratic Control in Britain*, Routledge; C. Skelcher (1998) *The Appointed State*, Open University Press; G. Stoker (Ed.) (1999) *The New Management of British Local Governance*, Macmillan; G. Stoker (Ed.) (2000) *The New Politics of British Local Governance*, Macmillan.

<sup>4</sup>The 'quango website' is at [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/quango](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/quango) and this links into lists of members serving on quangos, at [www.open.gov.uk/pau](http://www.open.gov.uk/pau) Of the bodies considered in our report, only the NHS Health Authorities and Trusts are included on this database. It is years out of date; it includes defunct NHS Trusts and people whose appointment ended some years ago. It also provides very little information beyond names of individuals.

## 2. PATTERNS AND PROCESSES OF GOVERNANCE

### Government and governance

The North East is now governed by complex networks of organisations, partnerships and people. In the past, the region was largely run and controlled by directly elected and multi-functional local authorities, operating in tandem with central government. In the last two decades, however, there has been a shift from this relatively simple structure of local government to a complicated pattern of *local governance*.<sup>1</sup> Local authorities now operate alongside a bewildering variety of local and regional organisations involved in the design, management and delivery of public services. To understand the nature of governance in the North East now, it is therefore necessary to examine the roles of a large group of directly elected, indirectly elected and appointed organisations.

The present structure of governance includes legacies from the past. Some of the region's large local authorities were created over a century ago and the new Regional Development Agency could trace its roots back to the 1930s. However, many, if not most, of the elements of the contemporary pattern of governance in the region stem from policy interventions and innovations since 1979.

Between 1979 and 1997, Conservative governments were concerned to reduce the scope of the public sector, privatise services, and promote a 'business-like' approach to public sector management. Powers were transferred from local authorities to centrally-appointed quangos such as Urban Development Corporations; Further Education institutions and Polytechnics were made independent of Local Education Authorities; and many local authority services were contracted out to the private sector. In the NHS, a large number of new quangos - the NHS Trusts - were established. The training system was essentially privatised and put in the hands of Training and Enterprise Councils. This period also saw some structural changes in local government (in the North East, the demise of Tyne and Wear and, subsequently, Cleveland County Council) and new arrangements in central government

administration (the establishment of regional Government Offices). In the 1990s, new ways of local policy delivery were also tried out, involving partnership approaches and competitive bidding for government funding.

The 'New Labour' government since 1997 has brought new imperatives and policies, leading to changes in existing institutions and the creation of new ones. Decentralisation has produced more structural change, with the establishment of Regional Development Agencies and their associated Regional Chambers. Local government is now embarking on a process of 'modernisation', substantially affecting structures, processes and the role of local authorities. There have been further changes in the NHS with the development of Primary Care Groups, and Training and Enterprise Councils will soon be abolished, replaced by Learning and Skills Councils. New initiatives - a plethora of Action Zones, for example - are spawning new partnerships almost everywhere. And, no doubt, more changes are on the way.

The past two decades have seen the development of an amalgam of institutions, often untidily superimposed on one another, and apparently in an almost constant state of flux. It is no wonder that many people are unsure, or do not know, which organisations are responsible for providing the various public services, let alone who runs them. Governance has become highly fragmented. Evidently, this can be ineffective and inefficient; on the other hand, it may provide opportunities for innovation and creativity. It also means power is more widely shared, though accountability is more blurred, more difficult to clarify and secure. Fragmentation also frustrates the government's attempts to introduce 'joined-up', multi-agency approaches to complex problems<sup>2</sup> - and tends to result in the development of partnership arrangements, involving the creation of yet more institutional infrastructure in this already crowded field.

### The 'appointed state'

Many of the public services in the North East are run by unelected bodies, some - usually called 'quangos' - appointed by government

ministers, others self-appointed in that their Boards select their members. Some are combinations of appointed, self-appointed, indirectly elected and directly elected people.<sup>3</sup> Some are straightforward quangos, while others are quango-esque hybrids, but all can be said to contribute to the 'democratic deficit' in the region's governance. Put simply, they cannot be voted out by the public, the electorate.

Over the past ten years or so, such bodies have attracted a considerable amount of criticism, both nationally and in the North East. The membership of the Boards of centrally-appointed quangos has been widely considered to be based on political patronage, while other, quango-esque bodies have appointed people to their Boards in a manner which has been far from transparent and difficult to justify. They have tended to be dominated by unrepresentative elites. Lines of accountability have been ill-defined and many of these bodies have been characterised by closed decision-making and secrecy.

In response to such criticisms, efforts have been made to regulate these bodies and those who run them. The Committee on Standards in Public Life - originally charged with clamping down on sleaze amongst MPs - has been an important catalyst for change since its formation in 1994. This standing committee, initially chaired by Lord Nolan, established seven 'principles of public life' governing the conduct and behaviour both of politicians and those in charge of unelected bodies.<sup>4</sup> These principles - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership - are now widely quoted and provide an important benchmark used by many organisations. The Committee extended its concerns beyond the conventional definition of quangos to include local public spending bodies such as Further Education Colleges and Universities, Training and Enterprise Councils and Housing Associations.<sup>5</sup> To Nolan, the public interest was regarded as paramount and has to be safeguarded not only by principled conduct but also scrutiny by central or local government. Subsequently, the Committee (now chaired by Lord Neill) has reviewed the extent to which its earlier recommendations have been implemented and has undertaken new enquiries - concerning the funding of

political parties and, now underway, standards of conduct in the House of Lords.

The Nolan Committee's recommendation to set up a Commissioner for Public Appointments was implemented by the government and the first Commissioner, Sir Len Peach, was appointed in 1995. His remit was eventually to cover a variety of so-called 'Non-Departmental Public Bodies' - NHS bodies, nationalised industries, public corporations and the utility regulators. These amount to some 14,000 public appointments. One important aspect of the Commissioner's work was to establish a Code of Practice for Public Appointments Procedures that was based (echoing the Nolan model) on seven principles: ministerial responsibility; merit; independent scrutiny; equal opportunities; probity; openness and transparency; and proportionality. Through this Code of Practice, it was hoped that while the 'great and good' may still be considered for these posts, they will at least be 'subject to the same processes as others and it will be clearly understood that appointments will be competitive'.<sup>6</sup>

The Nolan recommendations were also important in stimulating other contributions to the debate. The White Paper on the Governance of Public Bodies, published in 1997, suggested several methods through which local quangos could be made more accountable. These included: 'upward' accountability to a body set up by Parliament (such as a sector regulator); responsiveness to the needs of the local community or to the customers of the service in question; promoting openness in various forms including the publication of key data, annual reports and holding of meetings; and developing appropriate consultative arrangements involving local organisations.<sup>7</sup> On a similar theme, the Local Government Association has suggested a number of reforms to local appointed bodies that would involve them working closely with elected local authorities to improve channels of accountability. This would include 'written agreements with local authorities covering arrangements for consultation on policy matters and nominating representatives'.<sup>8</sup> Most recently, the sixth report of the Select Committee on Public Administration, has recommended that local bodies should be willing to appear at least once

a year before the relevant scrutiny committee of the appropriate local authority and that a regional structure of accountability 'would provide an ideal structure for the monitoring and oversight of many quangos which operate on a local or regional basis'.<sup>9</sup>

The opening up of debate about the practices of appointed and unelected bodies, new safeguards, guidelines for practice and proposals for reform have been very welcome. But by no means all of these organisations have been imbued with a new spirit of openness and accountability and there is still, all too often, unclear accountability and a culture of secrecy. The problem of quangos and other unelected bodies did not disappear with the advent of Nolan, nor with the election of the Labour government (which has, in turn, created new bodies). There have been significant improvements but, as our report demonstrates, practice is uneven and the democratic deficit remains.

### **The modernisation of local government**

Alongside the appointed state is the elected state, which itself has also been subject to criticism and is engaged in a process of reform and re-evaluation. Central government has initiated constitutional changes, including devolution, reform of the Lords, and the introduction of a Freedom of Information Bill (see Chapter 3). At the regional level, new institutional arrangements have been introduced – though it remains unclear where they will eventually lead (see Chapter 6). In relation to the governance of the North East, the 'modernisation' of local government – and the concerns which it aims to address – are of particular importance. Changes in local government, the local elected state, could well have considerable impacts on the overall pattern of governance in the region and democratic accountability.

Introducing the 'modernisation agenda', Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott spoke of the need for councils to 'break free from old fashioned practices and attitudes ... there is no future in the old model of councils trying to plan and run most services'. He argued for a substantial change in culture: 'there is no future for councils who are inward looking – more concerned to maintain their structures

and protect their vested interests than listening to their local people and leading their communities'.<sup>10</sup>

Proposals for change were set out in government White Papers and in the Local Government Bill, published in November 1999. Councils are to have the opportunity to introduce new management structures such as cabinet systems, directly-elected mayors and council managers. In line with the Nolan Committee's recommendations, councils will be encouraged to set up a Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. There are proposals to improve the existing low levels of involvement in local democracy and change the frequency and phasing of local elections. Councils are given further encouragement to work in partnership with other agencies and interests, to provide local leadership and draw up comprehensive 'community plans'. The introduction of the 'Best Value' regime, which has replaced compulsory competitive tendering, further emphasises the managerial role of local government and the need to consult with the community about its performance. A related agenda is that of 'Information Age' government (part of the White Paper, *Modernising Government*, 1999), which speaks of 'using new technology to meet the needs of citizens and business' and says that local authorities, as well as central government, need to plan for the electronic delivery of services.

The government's critique of local authorities, and consequent proposals for 'modernisation', highlight important issues and challenges for local councils – perhaps especially in the North East. Local authorities have been weakened by their loss of power, low turnouts in local elections and, in the North East, the lack of effective adversarial politics owing to the dominance of one party. It is far from clear that modernisation will make much of a difference – it is particularly disconcerting that some councils in the region have interpreted modernisation as an opportunity to set up cabinets closed to the public and consequently are attracting criticism for introducing practices which are felt to be secretive and anti-democratic. And it remains to be seen whether widespread public indifference to local government can be reduced, given its

diminished powers and its submission to central government. Nevertheless, local authorities are still important service providers and how they operate can make a significant difference. Moreover, they are democratically accountable. In a complex system with many public institutions, a local council is the only institution of local governance which all citizens can vote to remove and change.

### **Partnerships and communities**

Partnerships or networks, involving a variety of organisations and interests, represent another key element in the governance of the North East and an increasingly important one. In contrast to previous approaches to the management of public services that were associated with either co-ordination by *hierarchy* (as in the post-war welfare state) or through *markets* (as in the Thatcherite 1980s), there has been a growing trend towards co-ordination through *networks and partnerships*.<sup>11</sup> In policy areas such as community care, public health, area-based regeneration and community safety, the onus is on a variety of agencies to work together – and to include, to a greater or lesser extent, local communities.

The development of a more co-operative, multi-agency approach is a central feature of the government's methods for tackling complex problems like social exclusion – cross-cutting issues which need a multiplicity of responses. This approach is now well-established in the regeneration field and is being pursued in the management of 'Action Zone' programmes concerned with education, employment and health. Partnership enables the formulation and delivery of holistic programmes. But there can be difficulties with inequalities of power within partnerships and with organisations exceeding their competence and infringing on the responsibilities of others. Partnerships vary widely in terms of their accountability, openness and representativeness, and there is no doubt that their accountability can be obscured by their complexity.

Governance in the North East largely denies or prevents real participation by so-called 'ordinary people', the majority who are not part of the 'elite' appointed to run things nor

active in politics. However, the growth of partnership has provided new opportunities for the involvement of local people and communities, so extending participation. This is particularly evident in regeneration partnerships, now expected fully to involve local residents in devising, managing and delivering regeneration programmes. There is a great deal of rhetoric about community 'empowerment' and 'capacity building' but, again, practice is uneven. Real partnership with local people is not proving easy to achieve. Paternalistic local authorities can be unwilling to stand back and hand over power, and councillors can feel threatened and may be justified in questioning the democratic legitimacy of community 'representatives'. Communities may themselves find it difficult to engage in the practice of governance, disempowered by processes and structures and used to being subject to top-down service delivery and rarely consulted.

Despite the difficulties of creating and maintaining effective partnerships, the partnership approach has considerable benefits and potential; it may be the only way of making a complex pattern of governance work effectively. And, despite the difficulties of involving local communities, community involvement may be one of the most feasible ways, at present, of opening up governance, holding public institutions to account and broadening the range of people who run the North East.

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<sup>1</sup> See G. Stoker (ed.) (1999) *The New Management of British Local Governance*, Macmillan.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the problems of overlapping agencies and consequent fragmentation, see the report from the Cabinet Office's Performance and Innovation Unit (2000) *Reaching Out: The Role of Central Government at Local and Regional Level*. Available via the Cabinet Office website, [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation). Also see the PIU report, *Wiring It Up*, available on the same site. 'Joined up' policy approaches are discussed in two reports from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), *Cross-Cutting Issues in Local Government* (1999) and *Cross-Cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service* (2000). Both available via DETR website at [www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/cross/report](http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/cross/report)

<sup>3</sup> See C. Skelcher (1998) *The Appointed State: Quasi-Governmental Organisations and Democracy*, Open University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Committee on Standards in Public Life (1995) *First Report*, Cm 2850, HMSO.

<sup>5</sup> Committee on Standards in Public Life (1995) *Second Report: Local Public Spending Bodies*, Cm 3270, HMSO.

<sup>6</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments (1999) *Fourth Report 1998-99*, Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Available on OCPA website, [www.ocpa.gov.uk/index](http://www.ocpa.gov.uk/index). The current Commissioner is Dame Rennie Fritchie.

<sup>7</sup> *The Governance of Public Bodies: A Progress Report* (1997), Cm 3557. Also see *Quangos: Opening the doors* (1998), produced by the Cabinet Office; available on [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/central/1998/pb/open/index.htm](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/central/1998/pb/open/index.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Local Government Association (1999) *Local Quangos, Local Governance*, Report of the LGA Urban Commission Hearing. Available on the LGA website, [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

<sup>9</sup> *House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration, Sixth report on Quangos* (1999). HC 209. Available from the Committee's website, [www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/pubahome.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/pubahome.htm)

<sup>10</sup> John Prescott in the Foreword to the White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*. Proposals for modernising local government are put forward in this and in another White Paper, *Local Leadership, Local Choice*.

Both are available on the DETR website, [www.local-regional.detr.gov.uk](http://www.local-regional.detr.gov.uk)

<sup>11</sup> See: R. Maidment and G. Thompson (Eds) (1993) *Managing the United Kingdom*, Sage.





### 3. PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT

The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy governed by two assemblies: the House of Commons, comprising elected MPs, and the House of Lords, an unelected chamber of appointed and (still a few) hereditary peers. Parliament debates proposals for legislation, scrutinises the work of the government and provides for public expenditure through taxation. The government is made up of 90 MPs from the majority party in the Commons, together with 21 peers, and its members are selected by the Prime Minister. At the heart of government is the Cabinet of senior ministers and its associated sub-committees. Government departments are headed by ministers and staffed by civil servants.

The North East is just one part, one English region, of the UK. The region elects 30 MPs to the House of Commons, accounting for less than 5% of the total of 659 MPs. But the North East now finds itself closer to the centre of political life than ever before, since it includes the Prime Minister's constituency (Sedgefield) and a disproportionate number of the region's MPs are in the government. This traditionally Old Labour stronghold has – in some respects, at least – become the heartland of New Labour, despite some pockets of resistance.

The region's MPs do not 'run' the North East. However, a number of them are part of the government and almost all are in the party of government, and decisions taken by the government certainly affect many aspects of life in the region. In addition, MPs – whether senior members of government or backbenchers, whether Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat – have been elected to serve their constituents. Citizens are able to ask their MPs to take up their concerns and intervene on their behalf; all MPs have some influence upon, and access to, the machinery of the state.

The second chamber, the House of Lords, is involved in revising legislation and scrutinising the work of the government. It also has a judicial role as the final Court of Appeal. After the recent reform in November 1999, the Lords comprised 670 members, with an average age of 69, and included 552 life peers; 92 hereditary peers (90 elected from among the hereditaries by the peers themselves); and 24 bishops and 2 archbishops. Women accounted for only 105 of the 670 seats in the reconstituted House<sup>1</sup>. Peers do not, of course, represent constituencies and only a few have links with the North East: as far as is known, none of the peers serving in the government live in the North East. The most prominent member of the House of Lords living and working in the region is probably Michael Turnbull, the Bishop of Durham.

#### **MPs in the North East**

There are 30 Parliamentary Constituencies in the North East (see Annex 3.1). At the last General Election, in May 1997, 28 constituencies returned Labour MPs. The region has been solidly Labour for many years and is now overwhelmingly Labour, with only the two vast rural constituencies of Northumberland held by other parties (Berwick-upon-Tweed, held by the Liberal Democrats; Hexham by the Conservatives).

Of the 22 members of the Cabinet, six are North East MPs (Tony Blair, Nick Brown, Stephen Byers, Peter Mandelson, Alan Milburn, Mo Mowlam). Two others are junior Ministers (Hilary Armstrong and Joyce Quin). The region is, therefore, well represented in government, and at the highest level. This is very different from the situation prior to 1997; for 18 years of Conservative government, almost all the region's MPs were in opposition and, consequently, virtually powerless<sup>2</sup>.

Of the 30 North East MPs, only four are women. At the last General Election, there was a substantial increase in the number of women in the Commons and currently there are 121 women MPs, 18.4% of all MPs. Women are still significantly under-represented in the Commons and even more so in the North East, where only 13.3% of MPs are women. Only one of the region's MPs (Dr Ashok Kumar, born in India) is from a minority ethnic community.

21 of the 30 MPs went to university (this includes institutions which later became universities) and six of them were educated at Oxford. Eight had careers as lecturers and three as teachers before becoming MPs, and two were barristers. The majority had professional jobs and only six MPs were previously manual workers. At least seven Labour MPs have been trade union officials and three have had jobs in the Labour Party. Nearly two-thirds of the region's MPs began their political careers as councillors in local government, the traditional apprenticeship for MPs. Tony Blair, Alan Milburn and Mo Mowlam are interesting exceptions, having come into the Commons without first being local councillors.

The youngest MP in the region is 42 (Alan Milburn) and the oldest is 64 (Frank Cook). The average age is 53. In other words, the oldest MP was born in 1935 and half were born after the Second World War.

Thus, a picture of the 'typical' North East MP emerges – and quite strongly. The typical MP in the region is male, white and in his 40s or 50s; he was university-educated, has had a professional occupation and been a councillor before becoming an MP. The typical MP is, of course, Labour. There may be a mix of New Labour and Old Labour MPs, but less of a class mix than in the past: few can realistically claim to be 'working class', if that means having had a manual occupation. In addition, few (if any) have ever run a business and the majority have had public sector jobs.

The perhaps still lingering stereotype of a North East MP, as a tough working class man, who bluntly speaks his mind in a thick regional accent and prefers the local Working Men's Club to the House of Commons, is certainly outdated. Men still dominate the region's politics – that aspect of the stereotype remains correct – but nowadays most are 'middle class'. Most are drawn from quite a narrow range of backgrounds. MPs represent their constituents – but are not representative of the region's population.

### **The election of MPs**

Almost all parliamentary candidates are selected by their political party, but individuals are also free to stand for election. All candidates must pay a deposit of £500 which is forfeited if they obtain less than 5% of the votes cast; this is intended to deter frivolous candidates. Selection by a party involves a combination of selection by local party members in the constituency and the national party organisation, which has an approved list of candidates. The national organisation (such as Conservative Central Office or Labour's Millbank HQ) may bring pressure to bear on local party members to choose a particular candidate and may impose particular rules – for example, Labour regulated the choice of candidates at the last General Election to ensure there were more women candidates<sup>3</sup>. Candidates have to be aged over 21 and not disqualified from sitting in the House of Commons.

General Elections must be held at least every five years, though the Prime Minister can decide to hold an election before this period is up. In between General Elections, By-Elections are held as necessary to elect a new MP to an individual constituency with a vacant seat.

MPs are elected on a first-past-the-post basis: the candidate with the most votes wins the seat. Virtually everyone aged 18 and over may vote provided they have submitted their names for entry on the electoral register.

In the 1997 General Election, the Labour Party actually received only a 44.4% share of the UK vote, yet this produced a 179 seat majority in the Commons. Evidently, the party's election tactic of concentrating effort on crucial voters in marginal seats paid off. Critics of the first-past-the-post system argue that this is unfair and proportional representation (PR) would be more democratic; under some PR systems, Labour would not have had a majority of Commons seats. Clearly, under present arrangements, many voters who supported defeated candidates may feel that their votes count for nothing.

However, in the North East at least, nearly all successful candidates had majority support of their electorates – while in the UK only 53% of MPs received more than half the votes in their constituencies. Results from the 1997 General Election in the North East are presented in Table 3.1. Key points are:

- All 28 of the Labour MPs received more than half the votes in their constituencies. Their share of the vote ranged from 54.7% (in Middlesbrough South & Cleveland East) to 80.2% (Easington). Only the two non-Labour MPs had less than half the votes: Berwick-upon-Tweed (45.5% share) and Hexham (38.8%).
- On the whole, Labour majorities in the region's constituencies are very substantial – none of them are less than 10,000. The biggest majority was in Easington, where the Labour candidate received just over 30,000 more votes than the Conservative candidate who came second in the poll. The only seat which can be considered 'marginal' is Hexham, where the Conservative candidate held on to the seat with a majority of only 222.
- In the UK in 1997, the proportion of the electorate who actually voted ('turnout') was 71.5%. In the North East, turnout was below that figure in 22 of the 30 constituencies. Turnout varied considerably across the region, from 77.5% in Hexham to 57.1% in the Tyne Bridge constituency.

It is reasonable to surmise that, in 1997, the majority of voters in the North East got what they wanted: a Labour MP and a Labour government. They may not have got the candidate they would have wished (chosen by the party) and those who supported candidates who lost may well feel their vote was pointless and they are unrepresented. Moreover, the first-past-the-post system produces bizarre results. For example, in 1997 the Conservatives won only 165 seats, yet their share of the vote was only one percentage point lower than Labour's in 1987 – when Labour won 229 seats.

Turnout is lower than in many other countries and is falling. In 1997, turnout fell to 71.5%, the lowest level since 1935; and only 30.9% of the total electorate actually voted the Blair government into power. It is worth stressing, however, that this level of turnout at General Elections is well above that for local elections and, in that sense, MPs may claim greater democratic legitimacy than local councillors.

### **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration of MPs**

Essentially, an MP is elected to represent their constituents and take part in the business of Parliament. In the constituency, the role can be about dealing with people's problems, holding surgeries, meeting people and attending social functions. In the Commons, the MP may get involved in debates in the Chamber, sit on Select Committees or be a member of the government. Some MPs regard the job as a part-time activity and spend much of their time on other work, notably Conservative MPs serving as company directors. For others, particularly ministers, it is a full-time job which may involve a very heavy burden of work and responsibility.

Before 1911, MPs were not paid and until the mid-1960s were paid only the equivalent of part-time salaries. In the past, it had been expected they would have other incomes and would want to give their services free; this assumption was evidently unreasonable in relation to many MPs – especially Labour MPs – without independent means. It was undoubtedly a barrier to the effective exercise of representative democracy. In 1964, the remuneration of MPs and ministers was reviewed and revised. It was agreed that they should be paid a salary sufficient to enable them 'efficiently to discharge the duties of the service, without undue financial worry and to live and maintain themselves and their families at a modest but honourable level'.

MPs are now paid a basic annual salary of £48,371 and there is a compulsory contributory pension scheme. MPs' salaries are taxable. MPs are also entitled to an allowance for office costs, including secretarial and research assistance expenses, of up to £50,264 a year. There are allowances for London MPs (£1,436 a year) and, for provincial MPs, subsistence allowances (up to £12,984) and

allowances for second homes. MPs are entitled to free stationery, postage and inland telephone calls from within the House of Commons and to travel or car mileage allowances.<sup>4</sup>

Ministers and other office-holders in the Commons are awarded additional salaries reflecting their responsibilities. The Prime Minister's annual salary entitlement is currently £155,550; the salary for a Cabinet Minister, and for the Speaker, is £112,678; the Leader of the Opposition gets £107,320; and a Minister of State has a salary of £81,730. These figures include the basic MP's allowance of £48,371. However, following the 1997 General Election, the Prime Minister and Cabinet decided not to take increases which had been agreed and therefore not take their full salary entitlements. Consequently, the Prime Minister receives £109,768 and Cabinet Ministers £94,157 a year.

Members who cease being MPs are eligible for a 'resettlement grant' to assist with the costs of 'adjusting to non-parliamentary life'. This is based on age and years of service and ranges from 50% to 100% of a year's salary. There is also a 'winding up allowance' of up to £16,755 to help meet the costs of completing parliamentary and constituency business. Allowances are payable to those ceasing to be ministers.

Ministers and office holders in the House of Lords are paid salaries, ranging from £40,547 for Whips to £151,002 for the Lord Chancellor (1998/99). Other members of the Lords are unpaid, but can claim allowances for subsistence, travel and office expenses in connection with attendance in the House and Parliamentary business.

### **Accountability and openness**

A great deal has been written about the nature and functioning of the UK Parliament, its strengths and weaknesses. The accountability of MPs and government is a complex matter and the degree of openness – or secrecy – has been much debated, notably in relation to proposed legislation on Freedom of Information.

MPs have multiple accountabilities – to constituents, party and government. They may also vote according to their conscience. At the most basic and fundamental level, they can be brought to account by their electorate: they can be voted out. For most North East MPs, with massive majorities, this might be hard to imagine, not least because many people vote firstly for a party and only secondly for the candidate. More likely is de-selection, by the local party, a process which may be influenced by the national party.

It is widely argued that British government is secretive, even obsessed with secrecy, and that this has been increased by the growing concentration of power in the Cabinet, which meets in secret.<sup>5</sup> Polls reveal that the public do not trust ministers to release information and want their right to know enshrined in law<sup>6</sup>. But a vast amount of information about government policies and decisions is published and is fairly easy to obtain. In addition, debates in Parliament and discussions in Committees are published almost verbatim. The development of the Internet has made an enormous difference in extending access to information, and the website [www.open.gov.uk](http://www.open.gov.uk) provides routes to a large number of publications and into the websites of individual government departments. However, British government's websites give much less information than is available on US government websites.<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding conventional charges of secrecy, it is relatively easy to obtain basic information about institutions of government and about North East MPs. It is far easier than, for example, finding out who serves on a local Police Authority, how much they are paid, and what those organisations actually do. Of course, it helps that MPs are generally well known, in the public eye, subject to media attention – and that most want publicity. MPs' telephone numbers are in the phone book, unlike those who serve on the boards of quangos.

**TABLE 3.1: GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS 1997**

		<b>Labour</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Maj</b>	<b>Turnout</b>
<b>Northumberland</b>							
Berwick-upon-Tweed	No.	10965	10056	19007	1775	8042	41803
	%	26.2	24.1	45.5	4.3	-	74.1
Blyth Valley	No	27276	5666	9540	-	17736	42482
	%	64.2	13.3	22.4	-	-	68.8
Hexham	No	17479	17701	7959	2532	222	45671
	%	38.3	38.8	17.4	5.5	-	77.5
Wansbeck	No	29569	6299	7202	2102	22367	45172
	%	65.4	13.9	15.9	4.7	-	71.7
<b>Tyne and Wear</b>							
Blydon	No	27535	6048	10930	1412	16605	45925
	%	60.0	13.2	23.8	3.1	-	71.0
Gateshead E, Washington W	No	31047	6097	4622	1315	24950	43081
	%	72.1	14.2	10.7	3.0	-	67.2
Houghton, Washington E	No	31946	5391	3209	1277	26555	41823
	%	76.4	12.9	7.7	3.0	-	62.1
Jarrow	No	28497	6564	4865	4016	21933	43942
	%	64.9	14.9	11.0	9.1	-	68.8
Newcastle Central	No	27272	10792	6911	1113	16480	46088
	%	59.2	23.4	15.0	2.4	-	66.0
Newcastle E, Wallsend	No	29607	5796	4415	1771	23811	41589
	%	71.2	13.9	10.6	4.3	-	65.7
Newcastle N	No	28125	8793	6578	1733	19332	45229
	%	62.2	19.4	14.5	3.8	-	69.2
South Shields	No	27834	5681	3429	2034	22153	38978
	%	71.4	14.6	8.8	5.2	-	62.6
Sunderland N	No	26067	6370	3973	1803	19697	38213
	%	68.2	16.7	10.4	4.7	-	59.0
Sunderland S	No	27174	7536	4606	609	19638	39925
	%	68.0	18.9	11.5	1.5	-	58.8
Tyne Bridge	No	26767	3861	2785	1437	22906	34850
	%	76.8	11.1	8.0	4.1	-	57.1
Tynemouth	No	28318	17045	4509	1281	11273	51153
	%	55.4	33.3	8.8	2.5	-	77.1

		<b>Labour</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Maj</b>	<b>Turnout</b>
Tyneside N	No %	32810 72.7	6167 13.7	4762 10.6	1382 3.0	26643 -	45121 67.9
<b>County Durham</b>							
Bishop Auckland	No %	30359 66.0	9295 20.2	4223 9.2	2104 4.6	21064 -	45981 68.9
Darlington	No %	29658 61.6	13633 28.3	3483 7.2	1399 2.9	16025 -	48173 74.0
Durham City	No %	31102 63.3	8598 17.5	7499 15.3	1936 3.9	22504 -	49135 70.9
Durham N	No %	33142 70.3	6843 14.5	5225 11.1	1958 4.1	26299 -	47168 69.5
Durham NW	No %	31885 68.8	7101 15.3	4991 10.8	2372 5.1	24754 -	46319 69.0
Easington	No %	33600 80.2	3588 8.6	3025 7.2	1682 4.0	30012 -	41895 67.0
Sedgefield	No %	33526 71.2	8383 17.8	3050 6.5	2157 4.6	25143 -	47116 72.6
<b>Cleveland (Teesside &amp; H'pool)</b>							
Hartlepool	No %	26997 60.7	9489 21.3	6248 14.1	1718 3.9	17508 -	44452 65.7
Middlesbrough	No %	32925 71.4	7907 17.1	3934 8.5	1331 2.9	25018 -	46097 65.0
Middlesbrough S, C'land E	No %	29319 54.7	18712 34.9	4004 7.5	1552 2.9	10607 -	53587 76.0
Redcar	No %	32972 67.3	11308 23.1	4679 9.6	- -	21664 -	48959 71.0
Stockton N	No %	29726 66.8	8369 18.8	4816 10.8	1563 3.5	21357 -	44474 69.1
Stockton S	No %	28790 55.2	17205 33.0	4721 9.1	1400 2.7	11585 -	52116 76.1

The other Parties which had candidates in the 1997 General Election were: Referendum; UK Independence; Green; Independent Labour; Socialist Party of GB; Socialist Labour; Communist Party of Britain; Interests of South Shields People; Monster Raving Loony; Socialist; Natural Law.

In recent years, much attention has been focused on the interests of MPs and the extent to which those interests have influenced them. There have been major scandals, further undermining public confidence in politicians. And in the North East, Peter Mandelson was held to account for failing to declare a loan, resulting in him losing his previous ministerial post. Now, there are stringent requirements to disclose interests and these are recorded in the Register of Members' Interests compiled under the authority of the Committee on Standards and Privileges.

Rules for disclosure formulated in 1974 were reviewed and strengthened following the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life and the 1996 Code of Conduct of Members. The Nolan Committee's recommendations also led to the appointment of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (currently Sir Gordon Downey) whose role is to advise MPs on standards and investigate alleged breaches of rules by MPs. Any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which might be considered to influence an MP should be registered. This includes remunerated directorships, employment, sponsorship, gifts, visits, land and property and significant shareholdings. The Register is available for public inspection at the House of Commons and is now easily available on the Internet.<sup>8</sup> In general, North East MPs' entries are limited to occasional journalism, consultancy and provision of office space in their constituencies; some have declared nil interests.

There is also a Register of Lords' Interests (established as recently as 1995). This is less stringent than the Commons register. The registration of consultancy or similar arrangements and financial interests in Parliamentary lobby businesses is mandatory, while disclosure of other interests is discretionary<sup>9</sup>. The Register is available for public inspection at the House of Lords and is also published on the Internet.

### **Future developments**

Some important developments are under consideration and, if implemented, will have a substantial effect on the machinery of government and the quality of democracy. These include:

- A Freedom of Information Act. A Bill to extend the people's 'right to know' about what the government is doing and why decisions have been taken is being debated in the current session of Parliament.<sup>10</sup>
- Reform of the House of Lords. The first 'transitional' stage of reform, which settled on a compromise leaving 92 hereditary peers, was completed in November 1999. The second stage is likely to involve replacing hereditaries with appointees (possibly including a regional dimension to appointment) and a relatively small number of elected peers.
- Reform of the voting system. An inquiry chaired by Lord Jenkins has examined the options for introducing a system of Proportional Representation. PR systems were used to elect members to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and European Parliament during 1999. It is possible (but currently seems unlikely) that PR could be used to elect MPs.

The first of these measures, a Freedom of Information Act, should reach the Statute Book during the present government's term of office. Further reform of the House of Lords and, possibly, of the voting system, appear to be matters for a second term, dependent on Labour winning the next General Election (which will take place sometime before May 2002).

These constitutional reforms would have some positive impacts on the North East – just as they would impact on other parts of the UK. However, for the North East, another aspect of constitutional reform – devolution of power to the English regions – is probably a more important issue.



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<sup>1</sup> A further 33 'working peers' were appointed by the government in March 2000, including 20 Labour peers, nine Liberal Democrats and four Conservatives. Eight are women, 25 men. Conservatives will still have the largest number of peers (236), but not a majority. Labour has 202, Liberal Democrats 63 and there are 161 cross-benchers, as well as the 26 bishops and archbishops.

<sup>2</sup> The impacts on the North East of changes in government are certainly not clear-cut. Critics argue that the region is ignored by Conservative governments because it votes Labour, and is ignored by Labour governments because its support for the party is taken for granted.

<sup>3</sup> Labour introduced all-women shortlists of candidates to stand for election, but this practice had to be ended in 1996 after a legal challenge. It is possible that the law will be changed to allow this practice to resume; otherwise, it is predicted that an equal gender balance among MPs may not be achieved until at least 2030 if the current slow pace of change continues (*The Guardian*, 8.3.2000, p. 10).

<sup>4</sup> Details on remuneration (in 1998/99) are given in 'Parliamentary Pay and Allowances: Current Rates', House of Commons Research Paper 98/86 (August 1998); current figures from the House of Commons Information Office (an enquiry service available to the public on 020 7219 4272).

<sup>5</sup> Some of the pressure to make the UK government more open comes from the new devolved bodies. Rhodri Morgan, the Welsh Assembly's First Minister, announced in March 2000 that minutes of the Assembly's cabinet meetings will be published on the Internet within six weeks of the meeting – a move which goes well beyond provisions in Jack Straw's Freedom of Information Bill. Cabinet minutes are on [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> See 'Poll shows depth of public distrust over secrecy', *The Guardian*, 9.11.1999, p.12. This poll, carried out by the Consumers' Association, showed that 92% of those questioned believed the government should be more open about how it makes decisions.

<sup>7</sup> See: S. Rogers, 'Shut.gov' (*Guardian* (online section), 2.9.99, pp. 2-3) for a critique of UK government websites and comparison with information available on US government websites – where strong Freedom of Information legislation ensures a considerable amount of disclosure.

<sup>8</sup> The House of Commons Register of Members' Interests is available on the Internet at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk). The Lords' Register is also available at this website.

<sup>9</sup> Lord Neill's Committee on Standards in Public Life has recently announced an inquiry into the disclosure of interests by peers, following concerns raised by *The Independent* newspaper that some of their interests are not registered under the discretionary rules. The committee is expected to consider whether the Lords should be subject to the same rules as the Commons, where registration is compulsory (*The Independent*, 13.3.2000). Consideration will also be given to setting up a commissioner for standards in the Lords. The Committee is expected to report in Autumn 2000. Following controversy over recently announced peerages, given to major donors to political parties, Lord Neill has said that the Committee may, in future, investigate 'cash for coronets'.

<sup>10</sup> The Freedom of Information Bill proposes new rights of access to information. It is intended to supersede the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information - a non-statutory scheme which requires government departments and other public authorities under the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Ombudsman to make certain information available to the public and to release information in response to specific requests.

The government's proposals under the new Bill create a statutory right of access, provide for a more extensive scheme for making information publicly available and cover a much wider range of public authorities including: local government, National Health Service bodies, schools and colleges, the police and other public bodies and offices. The provisions in the Bill will be regulated by a commissioner to whom the public will have direct access, rather than access only through the intervention of their Member of Parliament as under the Code. The Bill will permit people to apply for access to documents, or copies of documents, as well as to the information itself.

## **ANNEX 3.1: CONSTITUENCIES AND MPs IN THE NORTH EAST**

MPs can be contacted by writing to them at the House of Commons,  
London SW1A 0AA  
Tel: 020 7219 3000 (switchboard)

### **Northumberland**

#### **Berwick-upon-Tweed**

##### **Alan Beith (Liberal Democrat)**

Born 1943, Poynton, Cheshire  
Education Balliol College and Nuffield College, Oxford  
Career Lecturer in Politics, University of Newcastle  
Political Career Hexham Rural District Councillor, 1969-74  
Tynedale District Councillor, 1973-77  
M.P. for Berwick upon Tweed 1973-  
Liberal Home Affairs Spokesman, 1973-76  
Liberal Chief Whip, 1976-85  
Liberal Foreign Affairs Spokesman, 1985-87  
Liberal Deputy Leader, 1985-88  
Liberal and Liberal Democrat Treasury Spokesman, 1987-94  
Liberal Democrat Leadership Candidate, 1988  
Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader, 1992  
Liberal Democrat Home and Legal Affairs Spokesman, 1997-99

#### **Blyth Valley**

##### **Ronnie Campbell (Labour)**

Born 1943, Blyth Valley  
Education Ridley High School, Blyth  
Career Miner  
Political Career Blyth Borough Councillor, 1969-74  
Blyth Valley Councillor, 1974-88  
M.P. for Blyth Valley, 1987-  
Chair, Northern Group of Labour MPs

#### **Hexham**

##### **Peter Atkinson (Conservative)**

Born 1943, Northumberland  
Education Cheltenham College  
Career Journalist (Evening Standard); Director of Public Affairs for the British Field Sports Society  
Political Career Wandsworth Borough Councillor, 1978-82  
Wandsworth Health Authority, 1982-89  
Suffolk County Councillor, 1989-92  
M.P. for Hexham, 1992-  
PPS to the Armed Forces Minister, 1994-95  
PPS to the Chairman of the Conservative Party, 1994-95  
PPS to Ministers of State, Foreign Office, 1995-96  
PPS to the Chairman of the Conservative Party, 1997-98

**Wansbeck****Denis Murphy (Labour)**

Born 1948, Ashington, Northumberland  
 Education St Cuthbert's Grammar School, Newcastle upon Tyne  
 Career Electrician, Ellington Colliery; Trade Union Official  
 Political Career Wansbeck District Councillor, 1990-97 and Leader, 1994-97  
 M.P. for Wansbeck, 1997-

**Tyne and Wear****Blaydon****John McWilliam (Labour)**

Born 1941, Grangemouth  
 Education Heriot-Watt College, Napier College of Science and Technology  
 Career Post Office Engineer  
 Political Career Edinburgh City Councillor, 1970-75  
 M.P. for Blaydon, 1979-  
 Deputy Shadow Leader of the House, 1983-84  
 Assistant Whip, 1984-87

**Gateshead East and Washington West****Joyce Quin (Labour)**

Born 1944, Tynemouth  
 Education University of Newcastle; LSE  
 Career Lecturer in French and Politics, University of Bath; University of Durham. Political Researcher.  
 Political Career MEP for Tyne and Wear, 1979-89  
 M.P. for Gateshead East, 1987-97  
 M.P. for Gateshead East and Washington West, 1997-  
 Assistant Spokesman on Trade and Industry, 1989-92  
 Assistant Spokesman on Employment, 1992-93  
 Minister of State at the Home Office, 1997-98  
 Minister for Europe (FCO), 1998-99  
 Minister of State, Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1999-

**Houghton and Washington East****Fraser Kemp (Labour)**

Born 1958, Washington  
 Education Washington Comprehensive School  
 Career Civil Servant; Labour Party Official, 1981-97  
 Political Career M.P. for Houghton and Washington East, 1997-

**Jarrow****Stephen Hepburn (Labour)**

Born 1959, Jarrow  
 Education University of Newcastle  
 Career Building Worker; Research Assistant to Don Dixon M.P.  
 Political Career South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Councillor, 1985-97; Deputy Leader, 1990-97  
 M.P. for Jarrow, 1997-

**Newcastle Central****Jim Cousins (Labour)**

Born 1944, Hammersmith, London  
 Education New College, Oxford; LSE  
 Career Researcher and Lecturer on Industrial Relations at Durham University, Bradford University and Sunderland Polytechnic  
 Political Career Wallsend Borough Councillor, 1969-73  
 Tyne and Wear County Councillor, 1973-86; Deputy Leader, 1981-86  
 M.P. for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, 1987-  
 Assistant Spokesman on Trade and Industry, 1992-94  
 Assistant Spokesman on Foreign Affairs, 1994-95

**Newcastle East and Wallsend****Nick Brown (Labour)**

Born 1950, Kent  
 Education University of Manchester  
 Career Union Legal Adviser (GMWU)  
 Political Career Newcastle City Councillor, 1980-84  
 M.P. for Newcastle East (Wallsend incorporated in 1997), 1983-  
 Opposition Spokesman, Legal Affairs, 1984-87  
 Shadow Financial Secretary, 1987-92  
 Deputy Shadow Leader of the Commons, 1992-94  
 Shadow Minister for Health, 1994-95  
 Deputy Chief Whip, 1995-97  
 Chief Whip, 1997-98  
 Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1998-  
 Privy Councillor, 1997  
 Honours

**Newcastle North****Doug Henderson**

Born 1949, Edinburgh  
 Education University of Strathclyde  
 Career Apprentice Engineer; Clerk; Trade Union Official (GMB)  
 Political Career M.P. for Newcastle upon Tyne North, 1987-  
 Assistant Spokesman on Trade and Industry, 1988-92  
 Spokesman on Local Government, 1992-94  
 Spokesman on the Citizen's Charter, 1994-95  
 Deputy Home Affairs Spokesman, 1995-96  
 Minister of State (Europe) at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1997-98  
 Minister of State, Defence, 1998-99

**South Shields****Dr David Clark (Labour)**

Born 1939, Castle Douglas, Scotland  
 Education University of Manchester; University of Sheffield  
 Career Forester; Laboratory Assistant; Teacher; Lecturer in Public Administration, University of Salford  
 Political Career M.P. for Colne Valley, 1970-74  
 Deputy Spokesman on Agriculture, 1972-74  
 M.P. for South Shields, 1979-  
 Deputy Spokesman on Defence, 1980-81

Deputy Spokesman on the Environment, 1981-86  
 Spokesman on Environmental Protection, 1986-87  
 Spokesman on Agriculture and Rural Affairs, 1987-92  
 Spokesman on Defence and Disarmament, 1992-97  
 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1997-98  
 Privy Councillor, 1997

**Sunderland North**  
**Bill Etherington**

Born 1941, Sunderland  
 Education Monkwearmouth Grammar School  
 Career Colliery Fitter; NUM Official – Vice President North East NUM, 1983-92  
 Political Career M.P. for Sunderland North, 1992-

**Sunderland South**  
**Chris Mullin**

Born 1947, Chelmsford  
 Education University of Hull; City University  
 Career Journalist; Author  
 Political Career M.P. for Sunderland South, 1992-  
 Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Environment,  
 Transport and the Regions, 1999-

**Tyne Bridge**  
**David Clelland**

Born 1943, Gateshead  
 Education Gateshead Technical College; Hebburn Technical College  
 Career Electrical Tester  
 Political Career Gateshead Councillor, 1972-86; Leader, 1984-86  
 M.P. for Tyne Bridge, 1985-  
 Assistant Opposition Whip, 1995-97  
 Assistant Government Whip, 1997-

**Tynemouth**  
**Alan Campbell**

Born 1957, Northumberland  
 Education University of Lancaster; University of Leeds; Newcastle Polytechnic  
 Career Teacher  
 Political Career M.P. for Tynemouth, 1997-  
 Secretary, Northern Group of Labour MPs

**Tyneside North**  
**Stephen Byers (Labour)**

Born 1953, Wolverhampton  
 Education Chester College of Further Education; Liverpool Polytechnic  
 Career Senior Lecturer in Law, Newcastle Polytechnic  
 Political Career North Tyneside Borough Councillor, 1980-92; Deputy Leader, 1985-92  
 M.P. for Wallsend/Tyneside North, 1992-  
 Labour Whip, 1994-97  
 Assistant Spokesman on Education and Employment, 1995-97  
 Deputy Spokesman on Education and Employment, 1996-97

Minister of State for Education and Employment, 1997-98  
 Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 1998  
 Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, 1998-  
 Privy Councillor, 1998

### **County Durham**

#### **Bishop Auckland**

##### **Derek Foster (Labour)**

Born 1937, Sunderland  
 Education St Catherine's College, Oxford  
 Career Youth and Community Worker; Further Education Organiser; Assistant Director of Education, Sunderland.  
 Political Career Sunderland County Borough Councillor, 1972-74  
 Tyne & Wear County Councillor, 1973-77  
 M.P. for Bishop Auckland, 1979-  
 Opposition Whip, 1981-82  
 Assistant Social Security Spokesman, 1982-83  
 PPS to the Leader of the Opposition, 1983-85  
 Opposition Chief Whip, 1985-95  
 Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1995-97  
 Privy Councillor, 1993

#### **Darlington**

##### **Alan Milburn (Labour)**

Born 1958, Birmingham  
 Education University of Lancaster; University of Newcastle  
 Career Trade Union Research Co-ordinator; Local Government Officer, North Tyneside MBC  
 Political Career M.P. for Darlington, 1992-  
 Assistant Spokesman on Health, 1995-96  
 Shadow Treasury Secretary, 1996-97  
 Minister of State for Health, 1997-98  
 Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 1998-99  
 Secretary of State for Health, 1999-  
 Privy Councillor, 1998

#### **Durham City**

##### **Gerry Steinberg (Labour)**

Born 1945, Durham  
 Education Sheffield College of Education; Newcastle Polytechnic  
 Career Teacher  
 Political Career Pitington and Sherburn Parish Councillor, 1970-76  
 Durham City Councillor, 1975-87  
 M.P. for the City of Durham, 1987-

#### **Durham North**

##### **Giles Radice (Labour)**

Born 1936  
 Education Winchester; Magdalen College, Oxford  
 Career Trade Union Researcher

Political Career M.P. for Chester-le-Street, 1973-83  
 M.P. for North Durham, 1983-  
 PPS to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, 1978-79  
 Assistant Foreign Affairs Spokesman, 1981  
 Employment Spokesman, 1982-83  
 Education Spokesman, 1983-87

### **Durham North West**

#### **Hilary Armstrong (Labour)**

Born 1945, Sunderland  
 Education West Ham Technology College, University of Birmingham  
 Career Social Worker; Lecturer in Community and Youth Work, Sunderland  
 Polytechnic  
 Political Career Durham County Councillor, 1985-87  
 M.P. for Durham North West, 1987-  
 Education Spokeswoman, 1988-92  
 PPS to Leader of the Opposition, 1992-94  
 Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Transport and  
 the Regions (Local Government and Regions Minister), 1997-

### **Easington**

#### **John Cummings (Labour)**

Born 1943, Newcastle upon Tyne  
 Education Easington Technical College  
 Career Colliery Electrician  
 Political Career Easington District Councillor, 1973-87; Leader, 1979-87  
 M.P. for Easington, 1987-  
 Whip, 1993-97

### **Sedgefield**

#### **Tony Blair (Labour)**

Born 1953, Edinburgh  
 Education St John's College, Oxford; Lincoln's Inn  
 Career Barrister  
 Political Career M.P. for Sedgefield, 1983-  
 Assistant Treasury Spokesman, 1984-87  
 Deputy Trade and Industry Spokesman, 1987-88  
 Energy Spokesman, 1988-89  
 Employment Spokesman, 1989-92  
 Shadow Home Secretary, 1992-94  
 Labour Leader, 1994-  
 Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil  
 Service, 1997-  
 Honours Privy Counsellor, 1994

**Cleveland (Teesside and Hartlepool)****Hartlepool****Peter Mandelson (Labour)**

Born	1953, London
Education	St Catherine's College, Oxford
Career	Trade Union Researcher; TV Producer; Labour Party Official
Political Career	Lambeth Borough Councillor, 1979-82 M.P. for Hartlepool, 1992- Opposition Whip, 1994-95 Opposition Spokesman on the Duchy of Lancaster (Civil Service), 1995-96 Opposition Spokesman on the Duchy of Lancaster (Election Planning), 1996-97 Minister Without Portfolio (Cabinet Office), 1997-98 Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, 1998 Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1999-
Honours	Privy Councillor, 1998

**Middlesbrough****Stuart Bell (Labour)**

Born	1938, High Spennings, Co. Durham
Education	Council of Legal Education, Gray's Inn
Career	Colliery Clerk, Journalist, Barrister
Political Career	Newcastle City Councillor, 1980-83 M.P. for Middlesbrough, 1983- PPS to Labour Party Deputy Leader, 1983-84

**Middlesbrough South and Cleveland East****Dr Ashok Kumar (Labour)**

Born	1956, Hardwar, India
Education	University of Aston
Career	Research Scientist
Political Career	Middlesbrough Borough Councillor, 1987-97 M.P. for Langbaugh, 1991-92 M.P. for Middlesbrough South and Cleveland East, 1997-

**Redcar****Dr Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam (Labour)**

Born	1949, Watford, Herts
Education	Durham University; Iowa University
Career	Lecturer, Newcastle University; Education Administrator
Political Career	M.P. for Redcar, 1987- Assistant Spokesman on Northern Ireland, 1988-89 Spokesman on Trade and Industry, 1989-92 Spokesman on the Citizen's Charter and Women's Affairs, 1992-93 Spokesman on National Heritage, 1993-94 Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1994-97 Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1997-99 Minister for the Cabinet Office, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1999-
Honours	Privy Councillor, 1997



**Stockton North**

**Frank Cook (Labour)**

Born 1935, Hartlepool  
Education Institute of Education, Leeds  
Career Teacher; Labourer, Manager  
Political Career M.P. for Stockton North, 1983-  
Whip, 1987-92

**Stockton South**

**Dari Taylor (Labour)**

Born 1944, Rhondda  
Education University of Nottingham; Durham University  
Career F.E. Lecturer; Regional Education Officer, GMB Union  
Political Career Sunderland City Councillor, 1986-97  
M.P. for Stockton South, 1997-

Sources: *House of Commons Biographies* (2000); *Who's Who* (2000); *Debrett's People of Today* (2000); local sources.

#### 4. THE EUROPEAN UNION

The UK is one of the 15 member states of the European Union. The UK joined the European Economic Community – the ‘Common Market’ – in 1973. Twenty years later, the Community evolved to become the European Union, a change which reflected the commitment to closer political and economic integration which had been negotiated and agreed through the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and has subsequently developed through the Amsterdam Treaty (1997).

Since its inception in the 1950s, this community of European states has developed and expanded. The initial customs union developed into the Single Market, established in 1992, which created a major trading bloc within which there is relatively free movement of goods, capital, services and people. Further economic integration is now underway through the mechanism of the Economic and Monetary Union and the single currency, the euro (although the UK has, so far, declined to join). Over the years, the community has grown through the accession of additional states and there are now 13 more states wishing to join, mainly from central and eastern Europe. At present, the EU has a total population of over 370 million and enlargement could add another 130 million.

The UK has increasingly become ‘a part of Europe’, particularly through trade but also through the extension of EU legislation and EU citizenship. The EU now has a substantial impact on economic and social conditions in the UK, particularly as a result of its legislation. However, while the EU is commonly perceived as a big spending bureaucracy, its budget is equivalent to only about 2.4% of total public spending across the whole Community.

The most evident impact of the EU in the North East is its financial assistance for economic development and regeneration projects, principally from the European Regional Development Fund and also the European Social Fund<sup>1</sup>. As an area which has experienced industrial decline, most of the region is eligible for funding under Objective 2 of the Structural Funds, and the North East received £532m assistance from this source

over the period 1994-99, as well as assistance from other EU funding regimes. Over the past ten years, the region has received more than £1bn in grants from Europe and is expected to receive a further £460m funding in the period 2000 to 2006 under the reformed Objective 2. Throughout the North East, there are infrastructure developments, job creation projects, tourism initiatives, education projects, training schemes and environmental works which have been partly financed by European grants and EU logos, indicating financial support, are a common sight. Yet, for many people, ‘Europe’ is little understood and viewed with indifference, if not suspicion.

#### Structures

The EU has a role in ‘running’ the North East. It sets some of the rules governing business and trade; it has introduced social policies which affect the region’s people; and it helps to fund numerous local projects. However, the EU’s contribution to the governance of the region is difficult to clarify, let alone quantify. Partly, this is because its influence is complex and diverse; it is also because power is shared among the EU institutions. Some decisions are taken by representatives of the governments of member states, some decisions are taken by European Commission bureaucrats, and some power rests with politicians in the European Parliament.

The overall direction of the EU is set by the European Council, which brings together the Heads of State or government of the 15 countries and meets in summit about twice a year. The day-to-day work of the EU is carried out by five institutions: the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors. There are also banking institutions (the European System of Central Banks and the European Central Bank in Frankfurt) which are crucial to the implementation of the EMU and the euro, and the European Investment Bank which provides loans for capital investment.

The *Council of Ministers* is made up of relevant ministers from the governments of member states (e.g. ministers of agriculture, finance, transport, etc.) and makes the final

decision on whether legislation is to be adopted. The presidency of the Council rotates and is held by a different state for a period of six months. Some decisions are taken on the basis of majority voting; others require unanimity. In many areas of legislation, adoption of proposals by the European Parliament is also required ('co-decision').

The *European Commission* is the largest of the institutions and is responsible for initiating proposals for legislation and carrying out EU policies. It is led by 20 Commissioners including a Commission President (currently Romano Prodi), nominated and chosen by the governments of member states. At present, two of the Commissioners are from the UK: Neil Kinnock (Administrative Reform) and Chris Patten (External Relations). The Commission manages the budget, half of which is still spent on support for agriculture.

Some power rests with the *European Parliament*. This body has the clearest connection with the governance of the North East since the people of the region are able to elect four of its members. Since 1979, the European Parliament has been a directly elected assembly and it has altogether 626 members. The Parliament is based in Strasbourg (meetings are also held in Brussels and its general secretariat is in Luxembourg). The European Parliament passes laws – but these have first to be proposed by the Commission – and scrutinises and controls the executive. One of its main powers is that the EU budget has to be adopted by the Parliament and this gives it some leverage. Originally, the European Parliament had only a consultative role but it has gradually become more important and powerful, its position boosted by the Maastricht Treaty (in 1992) and further reinforced by the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). Even so, its powers remain limited, it is overshadowed by the other institutions and often treated as an irrelevance by member states. The Parliament has recently attempted to address issues of mis-management and corruption in the EU, forcing the resignation of the Commission led by Jacques Santer, but it is unclear whether *fundamental* reforms will be successfully introduced.

Two other key institutions are the *European Court of Justice* and the *Court of Auditors*.

The Court of Justice, based in Luxembourg, has 15 judges appointed by member states, and can decide cases brought by states, EU institutions, companies or individuals. The Court of Auditors, with 15 members nominated by member states and also based in Luxembourg, has the task of scrutinising EU expenditure.

Finally, to complete this brief review of the main elements of the EU structure, there is the *Economic and Social Committee* and the *Committee of the Regions*, both advisory bodies. The Economic and Social Committee, established in 1972, comprises 222 members (24 from the UK) appointed by member states and drawn from three broad categories: employers, workers and other interests. Its role is to discuss issues and policies and offer opinions to the Commission and the Council of Ministers. The Committee of the Regions, set up only five years ago, also has 222 members (24 from the UK) drawn from local and regional government institutions. This committee is intended to counter the remoteness of the EU by providing a forum for views from the local or regional level; its role is consultative but it has succeeded in becoming moderately influential. The North East is represented on the Committee of the Regions by Councillor George Gill, Leader of Gateshead Council.

Through its MEPs, the region has a direct link with the EU. But it is important to bear in mind that there are day-to-day interactions between the region's public agencies and businesses and the EU institutions. This includes the development of funding bids, implementation of projects and involvement in European networks and initiatives. In addition, the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast, maintains an office in Brussels to act as the region's 'eyes, ears and voice' in the EU and, most particularly, in the Commission.

### **MEPs in the North East**

The main way in which the people of the North East are represented in the EU is through Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). There are 626 MEPs, including 87 from the

UK, and four of them are elected to represent the North East of England.

Three of the four are Labour MEPs (Stephen Hughes, Mo O'Toole and Gordon Adam) and are members of the European Socialists group in the Parliament. The fourth MEP, Martin Callanan, is a Conservative and a member of the group of the European People's Party and European Democrats, currently the largest group in the European Parliament.

The North East MEPs range in age from 38 (Martin Callanan) to 66 (Gordon Adam). Women are under-represented in the Parliament, comprising 30% of the MEPs, and the UK is below that, with only 24% of female MEPs (at the other end of the spectrum, 45% of Sweden's MEPs are women). With one woman MEP (Mo O'Toole) out of the four members, the North East conforms to the position for the UK as a whole.

All four of the region's MEP have been to university (or polytechnic) and three of them began their political careers as local councillors (see Annex 4.1). Before becoming MEPs they had professional occupations – in engineering, local government and public administration.

The region's longest-serving MEP is Gordon Adam, elected in the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, losing his seat in 1999 and then returning in 2000, after the resignation of Alan Donnelly. Stephen Hughes was elected in 1984 and both Martin Callanan and Mo O'Toole in 1999. In the past, MEPs were elected to represent parts of the region, which was divided into four Euro-constituencies (Stephen Hughes held the Durham and Blaydon constituency and Gordon Adam served Northumbria). In the 1999 elections, a regionally-based Proportional Representation (PR) system was introduced such that all four of the region's MEPs now represent the North East as a whole. Thus, an individual constituent living anywhere in the North East is now represented by all four MEPs.

### The election of MEPs

Elections to the European Parliament are held every five years and the last election took place in June 1999. Elections were held in all 15 member states.

In 1999, a PR system was used for the first time in a national election in Britain (PR had been used before in European Parliamentary elections in Northern Ireland). This brought the UK into line with all the other member states. Each party put up a 'closed list' of candidates ranked in order of preference and individual voters had to cast their vote (one vote) for a party rather than an individual. Seats were then allocated on the basis of the number of votes cast for each party.

In the North East, ten parties put forward candidates, each party entering four candidates. As well as the three main political parties, voters could choose from seven minor parties: UK Independence Party; Green Party; Socialist Labour Party; British National Party; Pro Euro Conservative Party; Socialist Party (GB) and the Natural Law Party. As in UK parliamentary elections, a deposit is required, with each party putting up a deposit of £5000 for their list of candidates, and this is returned if they obtain at least 2.5% of the votes cast.

The turnout in the UK at the 1999 election was the lowest in Europe: only 24% of the electorate voted. The North East had an even lower turnout of only 19.5%. Within the region, turnout was highest in Hexham (the UK Parliamentary Constituency) at 30.3% and lowest in Tyne Bridge, where a mere 14.5% voted.

In the North East, 42.2% (162,573) voted Labour; 27.4% (105,573) Conservative; and 13.5% (52,070) voted Liberal Democrat. The UK Independence Party got 8.8% of the vote, the Green Party 4.7% and the other five parties shared just over 3% of the vote.<sup>2</sup> This translated into three Labour seats and one Conservative seat.

In the 1999 elections, Martin Callanan, Alan Donnelly, Stephen Hughes and Mo O'Toole were elected. However, Alan Donnelly, a prominent Labour MEP who had served for ten years and was Vice Chair of the Party of European Socialists, resigned a few months after the election, in December 1999. It was

reported that he had become frustrated with the constant travelling between Strasbourg and Brussels, but it was suggested in the media that he hoped to obtain another political post back in the UK, possibly in the North East.<sup>3</sup> Under the rules of the European Parliament and the logic of PR, the candidate who was fourth on Labour's closed list, former Labour MEP Gordon Adam, replaced Donnelly automatically, without a by-election.

Nationally, the Conservatives did well in the 1999 elections, securing 36 seats, compared with Labour's 29 and the Liberal Democrats' 10 (other parties got 9 seats altogether). PR ensured that the overall distribution of seats reasonably reflected the proportion of votes cast for each party – a situation quite different from that in UK Parliamentary elections. The Conservatives had 35.8% of votes and 42.9% of the seats, while Labour's 28% share of the vote resulted in them winning 34.5% of seats.

PR may have produced a more 'democratic' outcome but the 'closed list' system was controversial and widely criticised. It meant voting for party and thus severed the tradition of voting for a candidate. And it does seem odd, even undemocratic, that a member who subsequently resigns is replaced, without a new election, by a candidate who actually lost in the previous election. It is also very debatable whether it is realistic to have all four MEPs representing a whole region. But the biggest worry is the low turnout in the 1999 elections, with only one in five exercising their right to vote. As in local government – which has similarly low turnouts – this lack of interest undermines, or at least greatly weakens, the mandate of MEPs, both in the North East and in the UK.

### **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration of MEPs**

The region's four MEPs each represent the whole of the North East. Like MPs, they perform a variety of tasks, including attendance at plenary sessions of the Parliament, attendance at Parliamentary Committees (MEPs generally sit on two of the 23 Committees), participation in delegations to non-EU countries, and constituency business, including holding surgeries (though only

Stephen Hughes currently holds surgeries). They also have an important role as advocates on behalf of the region and its interests, for example in relation to attracting inward investment or seeking EU support for local businesses and regeneration projects.<sup>4</sup> Most plenary sessions of the Parliament are in Strasbourg and committee meetings are generally held in Brussels.

At present, MEPs are paid the same salary as members of the national parliaments in their member states. Thus, UK MEPs receive the same annual salary as an MP, £48,371. This situation has produced considerable discrepancies, since there is wide variation in parliamentary pay across the EU. Consequently, reforms are being introduced (now awaiting Council approval) which will result in all MEPs being paid the same salary.

MEPs also receive allowances from the Parliament to meet office costs, travel, subsistence and payment of an assistant. These allowances are very generous; MEPs can claim a general expenditure allowance of 3314 Euro a month; travel allowances; a daily allowance of 235 Euro per day for attending official meetings; and can also obtain an allowance of up to 9559 Euro per month for secretarial assistance (one Euro = approx. 60p).

### **Accountability and openness**

Because of its complex structure, it is very difficult to establish exactly who is accountable for what, and to whom, in the EU. At the core of the EU is a powerful and unelected civil service in the European Commission, which is accountable to the Council and the European Parliament. The key decision-makers, ministers of member states, are accountable to their own governments and, ultimately, to national electorates, but the lines of accountability are convoluted. MEPs are directly elected and represent their constituents, but their powers are quite limited. Member states have presided over the development of this diffuse accountability and these messy arrangements – structures and processes which have resulted from their desire to retain elements of national control, while also accepting a degree of supra-national authority. The EU is inevitably a

hybrid political organisation, containing tensions between national and EU interests (and between Eurosceptics and enthusiasts for a 'United States of Europe'). Given its complex structure and also a widespread ignorance or misunderstanding of the EU, it is not surprising that the British press, reflecting ambivalence or antipathy towards 'the continent', are able to portray the EU as secretive, mysterious, undemocratic and prone to issuing bizarre directives. The EU's image problems are evidently not improved by corruption scandals and stories of the excessive perks enjoyed by officials and politicians.

The European Parliament is open to the public and press and the Council now admits journalists and allows television coverage. However, much EU business is conducted behind closed doors, particularly in the Commission – and new rules for freedom of information are restrictive and limited. The EU has made attempts to be more open and transparent; in recent years, the EU has become concerned about how it is perceived, not least because difficulties experienced in ratifying the Maastricht Treaty revealed a lack of enthusiasm, support and belief in the EU and mistrust of political union. This lack of interest, coupled with suspicion of the EU, is underlined by declining turnouts in European Parliamentary elections. The EU considers that its image problems have much to do with presentation and, therefore, more and better information could improve matters and help generate more popular support.

*Information sources.* Considerable effort has been made to increase the amount of information available about the EU. There are now several websites, and each of the EU institutions has its own website.<sup>5</sup> There is a plethora of free publications about the EU and large numbers of reports are produced (in all the official languages). There is even an EU helpline, for information on such matters as working in other member states.

The EU has set up a 'Network of European Relays', supported by the European Commission, comprising a network of libraries holding collections of EU documents and information materials. In the North East, there are two European Documentation Centres, at

the Durham and Northumbria University Libraries, which have the full range of EU publications, including legislation, statistics and business information, and these Centres are open to the public as well as to members of the universities. Collections of EU documents are also held at a number of selected public libraries across the region which have been designated as 'Public Information Relays' and EU business information documents are available at the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast. There are also four Resource Centres for Schools and Colleges (at Jarrow, South Shields, Morpeth and the University of Durham Stockton Campus). Information is now much more easily available than in the past; these collections, together with the Internet, have made a substantial difference. But much of the documentary material in the library collections is for a specialist audience and probably little of the free literature is read by the public. The public will get most of their information about the EU from the media – and much of that can be unreliable and partial, reinforcing prejudices about a misunderstood and puzzling organisation.

*MEP's interests.* MEPs have to declare if they have a direct financial interest in a subject under debate and must enter their interests into a register, updated annually. The register includes declarations of remunerated work and any support, financial or material, in addition to that provided by the Parliament. But the rules governing declaration are lax, since non-remunerated activities and interests do not have to be declared and sanctions are usually not imposed against those failing to declare interests. The register is not published nor is it available on the Internet, although there are plans to publish it on the Europarl website sometime in the future. There is only one copy of the register, kept in Brussels (and then brought to Strasbourg when plenary sessions take place there), which can be consulted by appointment with the registrar.<sup>6</sup> This lack of transparency and access to information by the Parliament itself casts doubt on its commitment to greater openness in the EU's affairs.

Britain's Labour MEPs have, however, decided to publish their declarations on their website 'in the interests of greater

accountability and public access'. Neither of the two Labour MEPs (Hughes and O'Toole) listed on the website declare remunerated interests; both have noted other interests, such as membership of a trade union.<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusion

The EU has important impacts on the economy and society of the UK and the North East. To many people, however, the EU is obscure, confusing and remote. Its image in the UK is generally poor and, despite attempts to improve the quality and flow of information, there is a widespread lack of understanding about its functions and institutional structure.

The North East has a direct democratic link with the EU through its MEPs. But the region's MEPs are much less well-known than MPs and only a small minority of the electorate makes the effort to vote in European Parliamentary elections. In addition, there is a democratic deficit within the EU, in that its Parliament is weak, its powers constrained. In reality, the people of the North East have minimal influence on the EU and, for the most part, the region's MEPs can have only a small impact on its policies and activities.

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<sup>1</sup> For a commentary on the impacts of the EU in the region, see *The North East*, European Commission, 1999. The text of this free brochure is also available on the Commission's website, [www.cec.org.uk/pubs/regions/ne/contents.htm](http://www.cec.org.uk/pubs/regions/ne/contents.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Data on the 1999 European Parliamentary elections from 'Elections to the European Parliament – June 1999', *House of Commons Research Paper*, 99/64. 25 of the region's 30 UK Parliamentary constituencies recorded a majority of votes for Labour while five had a Conservative majority (Berwick-upon-Tweed, Hexham, Middlesbrough South & East Cleveland, Stockton South and Tynemouth).

<sup>3</sup> See: 'Labour MEPs' Leader tires of 'impossible' demands', *The Guardian*, 16.12.99. Mr Donnelly has subsequently emerged as an e-commerce entrepreneur, a non-executive director and investor in internet company Just2Clicks (see 'Ex-MEP gains £3m paper profit overnight', *The Guardian*, 17.2.2000).

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<sup>4</sup> The role of individual MEPs in the European Parliament and in the region depends very much on their interests, enthusiasm and ambitions. One commentator has remarked that 'with few exceptions, British politicians see the European Parliament as second best: a choice for politicians on the way up to or down from Westminster'. (A. Boulton, in C. Rallings and M. Thrasher (eds.), *New Britain: New Elections*, Vacher Dod Pubs., 1999).

<sup>5</sup> The EU website, <http://europa.eu.int> provides a wide range of information and links to the websites of the EU institutions including the Parliament and the Commission.

<sup>6</sup> See: 'Scandal of red tape that hides MEPs' cash links', *The Express*, 17.3.99.

<sup>7</sup> The European Parliamentary Labour Party website is at [www.eplp.org.uk](http://www.eplp.org.uk)

## ANNEX 4.1: MEPS IN THE NORTH EAST

### Dr Gordon Adam (Labour)

Born: 1934, Carlisle  
Education: Leeds University; PhD, MIMinE, C.Eng  
Career: Mining Engineer  
Political career: Whitley Bay Borough Councillor, 1971-74. North Tyneside MBC Councillor, 1973-80 and Deputy Leader, 1975-80. MEP, Northumbria Constituency 1979-99. Returned as an MEP for the North East in 2000.  
EP positions: Member, Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. Former Vice-Chair, Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy. Former member, Fisheries Committee; Budgets Committee.  
Interests: Chair, The Northern Energy Initiative; Northumbria Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. Board member, Northern Stage; Whitley Bay Playhouse Trust.  
Contact: 7 Palmersville, Great Lime Road, Forest Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 9HN  
Tel: 0191 280 2929; Fax: 0191 256 6067

### Martin Callanan (Conservative)

Born: 1961, Gateshead  
Education: Newcastle Polytechnic  
Career: Engineer and Engineering Projects Manager (brewing industry)  
Political career: Tyne & Wear County Councillor, 1983-86; Gateshead MBC Councillor, 1987-96. Elected as an MEP for the North East, 1999.  
EP positions: Member, Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism  
Member of MEPs to the Joint Assembly of the Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the EU (ACP-EU)  
Contact: 22 Osborne Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE22 2AD  
Tel: 0191 240 2600; Fax: 0191 240 2612  
Email: [mcallanan@europarl.eu.int](mailto:mcallanan@europarl.eu.int)



**Stephen Hughes (Labour)**

Born: 1952, Sunderland  
Education: Newcastle Polytechnic  
Career: Local government officer, Sedgefield Borough Council.  
Researcher for Roland Boyes, former MEP.  
Political career: MEP, Durham and Blaydon Constituency, 1984-99. MEP for the North East, 1999-  
EP positions: Member, (Socialist Group Co-ordinator) Committee on Employment and Social Affairs  
Member, delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Co-operation Committee  
Socialist group spokesperson on Health and Safety and the Working Environment  
Declared interests: Member of GMB Union; member of Amnesty International; President of Chester-le-Street MIND. Board member of Roben's Institute (unpaid position)  
Contact: Room 4/23, County Hall, Durham DH1 5UR  
Tel: 0191 384 9371; Fax: 0191 384 6100  
Email: [alma@mep.u-net.com](mailto:alma@mep.u-net.com) or [sthughes@europarl.eu.int](mailto:sthughes@europarl.eu.int)  
Website: [www.daltonet.com/StephenHughesMEP](http://www.daltonet.com/StephenHughesMEP)

**Mo O'Toole (Labour)**

Born: 1960, Kendal  
Education: Newcastle Polytechnic; Newcastle University  
Career: Economic Regeneration Officer;  
Lecturer in Politics, Newcastle University;  
Head of Policy Promotion, Local Government International Bureau  
Political career: Former Councillor, Newcastle City Council  
Elected as an MEP for the North East, 1999  
EP positions: Member, Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport  
Member, delegation to the EU-Poland Joint Parliamentary Committee  
Declared interests: Member of MSF and UNISON. Patron of an M.E. Group in the North East  
Contact: 7 Palmersville, Great Lime Road, Forest Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 9HN  
Tel: 0191 256 6066 Fax: 0191 256 6067  
Email: [botoole@europarl.eu.int](mailto:botoole@europarl.eu.int)

Sources: EU websites, EP Labour Party website, regional press and local sources.

## 5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government provides and supports a wide range of local services, including: primary and secondary education; personal social services; council housing; roads and public transport; planning; recreational provision such as libraries and parks; environmental services including refuse collection; local regeneration and economic development programmes; and tourism promotion and development. Councils (local authorities) account for about a quarter of all public expenditure in the UK - £75bn a year – and are also major employers; in many areas, the local council is the largest single employer.

Although still important, councils now provide fewer services and have substantially less power and autonomy than in the past. Councils have steadily lost functions to other public sector agencies and quangos and to the private sector. For example, over the last twenty years, polytechnics and further education colleges became independent institutions, no longer controlled by local authorities, and council housing has declined through right-to-buy provisions and the rise of housing associations. Councils have also been encouraged to become purchasers rather than direct providers of services – so-called ‘enabling authorities’ – contracting-out service provision to the private sector as a consequence of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (now replaced by ‘Best Value’ arrangements).

Centralisation of governance in Britain has eroded the autonomy of local councils, such that they now operate within a framework tightly defined by central government, particularly in relation to the budgets they can set and their very limited local tax-raising powers. The majority of their funding comes from central government grants (60%) and non-domestic rates set by the government. Only about 15% comes from local domestic Council Tax. Moreover, central government can exercise capping powers to curb councils which seek to set budgets deemed to be excessively high. Local democracy may be a cherished

principle, but in reality is substantially constrained. It has been argued that local government has become emasculated to the point where it is now, in effect, local administration.

Moreover, local democracy is being weakened, challenged and undermined by low turnouts in local council elections. Reluctance to vote may indicate public indifference and perhaps a feeling that the choice of councillors or political composition of the council matters little, particularly because of the limited power of local government. In areas of one party domination, as in much of the North East, the electorate may sense that change is highly unlikely, if not impossible. And yet, councillors – unlike quango appointees – can be defeated at the polls and the composition of councils does matter, as is evident from the considerable variation in policies and performance between local councils across the country.

Many councils, under pressure to re-think their role and how they operate, are initiating changes, both in their structures and in their relationships with the community. Such changes are being strongly promoted by central government, which is pushing forward a ‘modernising agenda’. Following on from six Green Papers and the 1998 White Paper, *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, the Labour government has proposed a series of measures which will result in potentially far-reaching reforms, likely to become law in April 2001 after the passage of the new Local Government Bill. The government wants local councils to be less paternalistic and less inward-looking, to engage more fully with local people and work in partnership with other agencies and communities. Councils are to be encouraged to provide community leadership by working with others to draw up ‘community plans’, which would be comprehensive strategies for their areas. Government wants councils to re-structure and introduce streamlined decision-making by introducing cabinets, scrutiny committees and, in some areas,

directly-elected mayors. Changes to encourage and facilitate better turnouts at elections are also being considered and tested; this could mean, for example, voting by telephone, weekend polling and mobile polling stations.

In spite of the constraints and difficulties faced by local government, this element of governance remains of crucial importance as a provider of key local services and also as the arena in which citizens are elected to serve their local communities. Local councils have a substantial impact on the quality of life, especially so in the North East, where there is great reliance on public sector services – here, relatively few children are educated at private schools and council housing is still a significant sector. But local government may well be at a turning point: it may have to change and ‘modernise’ or, otherwise, could face further decline in its functions, status and legitimacy.

### **Who runs local government in the North East?**

There are 25 ‘principal’ local authorities (councils) in the North East. Five are Metropolitan Borough Councils (in Tyne and Wear) and five are Unitary Authorities (in the former Cleveland County area and Darlington). These ten authorities cover the whole range of local government services and functions in their areas. Elsewhere, there is a two-tier system of ‘shire’ County and District Councils; the County Councils run most services while District Councils’ responsibilities include council housing, local planning, some leisure and recreation services, waste collection, environmental health and the collection of Council Tax. There are two County Councils (Durham and Northumberland) and 13 District Councils in the region. Many, but not all, parts of the North East also have Parish (or ‘Town’) Councils, which have few powers and functions – their responsibilities are very local, such as allotments, footpaths, recreation grounds and village halls.

The region’s 25 principal councils altogether employ more than 110,000 people and therefore make a significant contribution to both the economy and the labour market. There is great variation in their scale of operation, the smallest authorities being those which do not have responsibility for education, since primary and secondary education represents a large part of local government expenditure. The smallest is Teesdale District Council, with only 155 employees and a budget of £2.8m in 1999/2000. The biggest, in terms of its budget, is Durham County Council, which has an annual budget of £373.6m and over 12,000 employees.

Labour dominates local government in the North East, controlling 19 of the 25 principal councils (see Table 5.1). One council (Berwick-upon-Tweed) is controlled by the Liberal Democrats and five are not controlled by a single party; four of these six non-Labour councils are in Northumberland. Many of the Labour councils have been Labour for many years. Durham County Council is a classic case, the first Labour-controlled County Council, in 1919, and Labour for all but three years (1922-25) of the eight decades since then. Most Labour majorities, in terms of the party’s seats on councils, are very substantial and nine councils in the region now have no Conservative members.

In respect of the number of councillors, the smallest North East council is Berwick-upon-Tweed, which has only 29 councillors, and the largest is Newcastle City Council, which has 78. Across the whole region, there are 1,279 councillors on the 25 councils, of which 842 (65.8%) are Labour, 199 (15.5%) are Liberal Democrat, and 131 (10.2%) are Conservative. The rest, 107 (8.4%), are from other parties – most of these are Independents.

**Table 5.1: Political Composition of North East Councils**

	Control	Con	Lab	LibDem	Others	Total
<b>County Councils</b>						
Durham	Lab	2	52	3	4	61
Northumberland	Lab	14	42	8	2	66
<b>Unitary Authorities</b>						
Darlington	Lab	15	35	2		52
Hartlepool	-	10	21	14	2	47
Middlesbrough	Lab	4	41	7	1	53
Redcar & Cleveland	Lab	14	32	11	2	59
Stockton-on-Tees	Lab	12	38	5		55
<b>Metropolitan Borough Councils</b>						
Gateshead	Lab		47	18	1	66
Newcastle upon Tyne	Lab		62	16		78
North Tyneside	Lab	17	34	9		60
South Tyneside	Lab		50	6	4	60
Sunderland	Lab	10	62	2	1	75
<b>District Councils</b>						
Alnwick	-	2	2	13	13	30
Berwick-upon-Tweed	LibDem	1	1	18	9	29
Blyth Valley	Lab	2	36	9	3	50
Castle Morpeth	-	4	10	7	12	33
Chester-le-Street	Lab	1	30	1	1	33
Derwentside	Lab		47		8	55
Durham City	Lab		33	13	3	49
Easington	Lab		45	1	5	51
Sedgefield	Lab		43	2	4	49
Teesdale	-	1	10		20	31
Tynedale	-	22	14	10	6	52
Wansbeck	Lab		25	19	1	45
Wear Valley	Lab		30	5	5	40
		131	842	199	107	1279

Source: K. Edkins' website: [www.gwydir.demon.co.uk/uklocalgov/](http://www.gwydir.demon.co.uk/uklocalgov/) (updated to 6.5.2000). The Table includes results from the May 2000 elections which were held in only six areas: Hartlepool, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. (In each of these areas, elections were held for one-third of the seats in 2000.)

In a formal sense, the elected members – the 1,279 councillors – run the region's 25 councils. But the real power is held by the majority party group and, in particular, the council leader and the committee chairs or cabinet members chosen by councillors of the majority party (where there is no one party in overall control, power is shared by the parties). However, a council's salaried officers, particularly senior officers, also have considerable power and are delegated to take many of the decisions. Formally, officers are appointed by councillors to advise them and to carry out their policies, but in some councils chief officers, especially the chief executive, will play a dominant role – while in others the politicians are very firmly in control.

Data on the characteristics of councillors was collected in the first (ever) census of councillors in England and Wales<sup>1</sup> which was carried out by the Local Government Management Board in Autumn 1997. Census results for the North East are as follows:

- Three quarters (76.6%) of councillors in the North East were men.
- The average age of councillors in the North East was 56. 83.8% were aged over 44, and 25.9% were aged 65 or over. A mere 3.3% were aged under 35.
- Only 0.8% of the region's councillors were from an ethnic minority group.
- 14.1% of the North East's councillors said they were disabled.
- 43.7% of councillors in the region were in employment, 39.5% were retired.
- Of those in employment, 62.6% had managerial, professional or technical jobs or were employed in education; 14.5% were in administrative, clerical, secretarial or sales occupations; and 22.9% had manual or craft occupations.
- Of those in employment, 46.2% worked in the private sector, 48% in the public sector and the rest in the voluntary sector.
- Just under a quarter (23.7%) of the North East's councillors held degrees or equivalent qualifications. 27.8% had no formal qualifications.
- 45.1% of the region's councillors had served for more than 10 years. The

average length of council service was 10.3 years in the North East.

North East councillors were slightly older than the national average, more were male, more were disabled and fewer were from ethnic minority communities. More of the region's councillors were retired and, of those in employment, fewer were in white collar jobs or in the private sector. Over a quarter (27.8%) of North East councillors had no formal educational qualifications, compared with 16.7% in England and Wales. Councillors in the North East have, on average, served on their councils longer – 45.1% for more than 10 years, compared with a national figure of 35.6%.

To summarise, most of the region's councillors are middle aged or older men, less than half are still working and those in work tend to be in 'white collar' jobs, half of them in the private sector. Most have been councillors for several years, quite a few for many years. The biographies of council leaders (Annex 5.1) further demonstrate these characteristics of local government in the North East – only two out of the 25 leaders are women. And a recent survey revealed that, in five councils in the North East, fewer than 20% of the councillors are women and Durham County Council has one of the lowest proportions (8%) of female councillors in Britain.<sup>2</sup>

This profile of the region's councillors probably fits with commonly-held assumptions and stereotypes and reflects the nature and traditions of local government and public service. It reflects some practicalities as well, notably that many younger people with full-time jobs would have difficulty in finding the time to serve on councils<sup>3</sup>. But it is of concern that, to a considerable extent, the characteristics of councillors do not reflect the composition of their communities; for instance, only 16.2% of the region's councillors were under 45. This suggests at least some difficulties in councillors understanding and representing the interests of all sections of the community and underlines the need to rejuvenate local government.

### The election of councillors

Local authority areas are divided into wards, each of which returns between one and three councillors in elections for Unitary, Metropolitan and District councils. In the case of County Councils, each County electoral division returns one member. Many councils (including all County Councils) hold elections every four years, but some (including the Metropolitan Boroughs) have elections for a third of the seats in three consecutive years within a four year cycle, with a third of the councillors retiring each time. Councillors serve four year terms and may, of course, seek re-election. All are elected on a first-past-the-post system. Elections for the new Greater London Authority this year were conducted using a form of PR, but at present it appears the government has no desire to introduce PR for other local elections. However, the government does want all councils to move to the system of electing a proportion of councillors each year so there is more frequent accountability at the polls.

Almost anyone can stand for election. The main requirements are that they are at least 21 years old (something of an anomaly, since voters only have to be 18), have lived or worked in the local authority area for at least the preceding 12 months, and are citizens of Britain, other Commonwealth countries, Ireland or elsewhere in the EU. People declared bankrupt, those who have committed certain criminal offences in recent years, and people employed by the relevant local authority are disqualified from seeking election.

Candidates need to be supported by nominations from 10 local electors. They may stand as individuals but the vast majority are members of a political party and are selected by their party. Selection may be a matter for the party members at the ward level – if there is a ward organisation – with candidates endorsed by the constituency party. Selection may be straightforward and uncontested, or may mean party members choosing between different candidates. The Labour party has recently introduced interviews and tests for existing councillors and prospective candidates in an effort to

raise the calibre of local councillors, adding another dimension to the selection process. Once selected, candidates standing for a specific party will canvass the electorate for support at the polls, putting themselves forward as individuals and promoting the local party's manifesto (if there is one). Candidates in local elections do not have to risk a deposit, but will inevitably incur expenses (for leaflets, for example); election expenses are limited by law (and may be met by the party they are representing), and have to be declared to the returning officer. Exceeding the limit on expenditure constitutes an election offence.

Turnouts in local elections in the UK have been declining for many years and are now very low – in fact, the lowest in the EU. In the 1999 local elections, Sunderland had the lowest turnout in the North East: only 19.2% voted (see Table 5.2). This was the second lowest in Britain (Wigan was the lowest, at 18.3%). The highest turnouts were mainly in parts of Northumberland, where there tend to be closer contests and where some councils are under no overall control - the highest turnout was in Berwick-upon-Tweed, where 51.6% turned out to vote. Altogether, 432 wards in the North East were contested in the 1999 elections and turnout exceeded 50% in just 14 of them. The ward with the lowest turnout was Sunderland Central, where a mere 12.4% of the electorate voted, followed by Newcastle's Moorside ward with a turnout of 15%. The wards with the highest turnout were Broomhaugh & Riding, in Tynedale, at 65.5% and St John's Chapel, Wear Valley, with 60.8% turnout.<sup>4</sup>

Turnouts are generally lowest in areas of social and economic disadvantage such as in inner city areas and deprived estates - and these areas may also have lower levels of voter registration on account of high population turnover. It is estimated that between two and four million people are absent from the electoral register in the UK and, to an extent, this reflects – still – the discouraging effect of the Poll Tax which many sought to evade. Under-registration means that turnout is even lower than official figures indicate.

<sup>1</sup> *First National Census: Survey of Local Authority Councillors in England and Wales in 1997*, Local Government Management Board, 1998. Questionnaires were distributed to councillors via their councils and a high response rate was achieved; replies were received from 406 of the 414 councils (98%) and from 67% of the 21,498 councillors in England and Wales.

<sup>2</sup> Information from: H. Harman (2000) *the Democratic Deficit 2000: A Report on the Under-representation of Women in Local Authorities in England, Wales and Scotland*. (Report available from Harriet Harman, MP at the House of Commons, tel: 020 7219 4218). Bolsover, Durham County, Forest Heath and Isle of Anglesey councils had the lowest proportions of women, all with 8%. Other very low figures

for North East councils were: Castle Morpeth (9%), Easington (16%), Gateshead (18%) and Teesdale (19%). The highest in the region was North Tyneside, with 40% women councillors.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently, most employers do not place barriers in the way of their employees serving as councillors and do allow time off, as is required under the Employment Rights Act. For recent survey findings, see N. Rao and K. Young, 'Working at having a voice', *Local Government Chronicle*, 10.7.98, p.15.

<sup>4</sup> Information on turnouts from C. Rallings and M. Thrasher, *Local Elections Handbook 1999*, published by the Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre, University of Plymouth.

**Table 5.2 Turnout in the 1999 local council elections in the North East**

<b>Unitary Authorities</b>	<b>% turnout</b>	<b>District Councils</b>	<b>% turnout</b>
Darlington	33.9	Alnwick	48.0
Hartlepool	26.4	Berwick-upon-Tweed	51.6
Middlesbrough	36.1	Blyth Valley	29.1
Redcar & Cleveland	42.0	Castle Morpeth	46.6
Stockton-on-Tees	31.4	Chester-le-Street	32.5
		Derwentside	34.5
<b>Metropolitan Borough Councils</b>		Durham City	37.5
Gateshead	26.0	Easington	28.1
Newcastle upon Tyne	25.0	Sedgefield	33.6
North Tyneside	32.3	Teesdale	43.2
South Tyneside	26.0	Tynedale	49.8
Sunderland	19.2	Wansbeck	32.7
		Wear Valley	35.0

Source: C. Rallings and M. Thrasher, *Local Elections Handbook 1999*; Table 11.

Note: In May 1999, local elections were held in 23 of the 25 local authorities; there were no County Council elections (the next County Council elections are in 2001). Vacancies were declared in 503 wards and 432 were contested. In 71 wards, 14% of the total, there was no contest (usually because the sitting member was elected unopposed).

Experimental schemes to improve turnout were tried in 32 selected areas across the country in the May 2000 elections. In the North East, Sunderland voters were able to cast their vote at early polling stations in main libraries, which were open for six days, and voting papers and ballot boxes were taken to elderly people in residential or warden-controlled accommodation. Gateshead tried out postal voting in two wards, in an experiment where only postal voting was available. Elsewhere, in other

parts of the UK, electronic polling was tested. Postal voting seems to have been particularly effective – significantly increasing the turnout in the two Gateshead wards, for example - while the other methods seem to have made little difference. These innovations, now being evaluated by the Home Office, may be tested nationally next year and making voting easier may help to secure greater participation in the electoral process.

## **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration of councillors**

As politicians, councillors are involved in developing and promoting policies. They also have individual and collective responsibility for ensuring that the authority implements agreed policies, performs effectively and efficiently, and operates legally. Councillors represent the electorate in overseeing the work of the council and have a representative role in responding to constituents' concerns and complaints. In addition, many councillors are nominated to serve on other organisations, notably on school governing bodies and other boards and committees which include local authority nominees.

For most councillors, a large proportion of the time they spend on council business is spent in committees. According to the 1997 census of councillors, councillors in the North East serve, on average, on about eight council committees or sub-committees (the average for the region's councillors is 8.6 committees, compared with a national average of 5.9). This is in addition to attendance at full council meetings. Thus, most councillors spend much of their time in meetings. They will also see constituents, at surgeries or elsewhere, and attend a variety of public meetings.

The census of councillors found that nearly three-quarters (73.3%) of councillors in the region were serving as school governors and 40.8% were on public boards or joint committees. The latter includes nomination to a wide range of organisations such as the North East Regional Assembly; police and fire authorities; Passenger Transport Authorities; joint boards for museums, airports and ports; and organisations like Northern Arts which have places on their boards reserved for local authority nominees. Councillors can also be appointed to quangos such as Health Authorities and NHS Trusts and to advisory agencies. Many councillors, 54.4% in the North East, also do other

unpaid voluntary work which may include, for example, membership of the management committees of voluntary sector organisations in their wards.

Clearly, councillors are models of 'active citizenship', active not only on their councils but also in other areas of public life. Senior councillors – leaders, committee chairs or cabinet members – can have a particularly heavy commitment of time and effort to council business. In the 1997 census, just over a quarter (26.0%) of councillors in the North East described themselves as full-time councillors, devoting more than 30 hours a week to council business. And the introduction of cabinets in local authorities serves to reinforce the distinction between the most active, powerful and usually full-time councillors and the others – the backbenchers whose role is more to represent constituents, scrutinize the council's operations and decisions and to serve in a part-time capacity. An important intention of the move to cabinet-style organisation is to reduce the time most councillors spend in committee meetings and allow more opportunity for them to represent their constituents.

Since 1972, councillors have been eligible for allowances to cover 'approved duties'. A council wishing to pay allowances has to publish details of its scheme and, since 1995, has been obliged to send information about allowances paid to the local media, rather than just have such information available for inspection. Allowances<sup>1</sup> can include:

- a basic allowance, regardless of the number of meetings a councillor attends, at a rate fixed by the council
- attendance allowance for 'approved duty' – attendance at council meetings and other duties
- special responsibility allowances for senior councillors such as the leader and committee chairs, at rates fixed by the council
- travel and subsistence allowances, payable within maximum rates set by the government



There is no longer any overall cash limit on the total allowances paid.

There is considerable variation among North East councils in respect of levels of remuneration paid to councillors. Data from the smaller, District Councils indicate that basic allowances, paid to all their councillors, range from about £500 to £4500 a year. Some councils pay attendance allowances while others have dispensed with these. Senior councillors receive a further special responsibility allowance; and leaders of District councils typically receive about £10,000 a year for their council work. Durham County Council pays a basic allowance to all councillors of £6,500 a year, and the leader receives a further £10,000 special responsibility allowance. No attendance allowances are now given.

In some authorities allowances are currently under review and being revised to take account of structural changes, notably the introduction of cabinets. There are indications that these structural changes are leading to some big increases. Sedgefield Borough Council, for instance, has recently proposed an increase in the leader's allowances from £6,500 a year to £20,000, with other cabinet members receiving £11,250 and backbench councillors £5,000. Newcastle City Council, which has already introduced a cabinet system, now pays a basic allowance of £6,365.40 to all councillors; cabinet members receive a further £3,182.70 and the leader gets a special responsibility allowance of £22,343.79. Attendance allowances are also paid for each 'approved duty'. The full-time senior councillor can nowadays receive remuneration similar to that for a modestly paid job – and in some cases, similar to the salary for a reasonably well paid job.

Levels of remuneration are usually not very great (especially compared to an MP, for example) and might well be considered reasonable recompense for a considerable commitment. But councillors' allowances can be a controversial matter – no doubt, some of the electorate feel that councillors

should not receive *any* remuneration for their public service.

### **Accountability and openness**

In comparison with some public institutions, councils are characterised by a high degree of accountability and considerable openness. It is easy to obtain the names and contact information for councillors. Some councils (Durham County Council, for example) list the names, wards and telephone numbers of all their councillors in the local phone book. Councils readily provide this information and, most council websites have lists of councillors and the wards they represent.

All councillors can be held to account by the electorate. They can be defeated at elections – though this sanction is, of course, only available every four years. In addition, they are accountable in law for their actions and councils are subject to judgement by the local government ombudsman and inspection by the Audit Commission.

The District Audit Service of the Audit Commission or other external auditors inspect councils' spending and if they consider expenditure to be illegal they may take the case to court; if proved, councillors can be told to repay the local authority (so-called 'surcharge') and can be disqualified from council membership. Councillors can, therefore, be personally liable. In cases of maladministration found by the ombudsman, individual councillors may be named, but cannot be suspended or removed from the council by the ombudsman.<sup>2</sup>

Councillors are obliged to sign a Code of Conduct which essentially obliges them to act with probity, in the public interest and uninfluenced by their pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests. It is expected that, in future, this code will be strengthened and extended as a result of the government's modernisation plans and councils will be obliged to set up a standards committee overseeing the conduct of councillors – some, such as Middlesbrough Council,

have already done so. It appears likely that tougher penalties will be applied to councillors guilty of misdemeanours in the future, based on judgements by regional standards boards whose members will be nominated by the local authorities but approved by the government.

Councillors are obliged to declare a pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in relation to contracts or other matters under consideration by the council. Indirect interest extends to the interests of a councillor's spouse, employer or a company in which the councillor has shares. Such interests generally mean that the councillor may not speak or vote on a matter, and failure to declare relevant interests is a criminal offence. Councillors must declare their interests in a statutory register which is open to public inspection.

Under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the media and public are given access to all council, committee and subcommittee meetings, unless the business is confidential or exempt – for example, commercially sensitive material or personal information. Agendas and papers have to be available to the public as – interestingly – do background papers specified in relation to items under discussion. Councils must also publish an annual report, accounts, information on councillors' interests and allowances, and a register of planning applications. Before the annual audit, a council must make available for public inspection for 15 working days, all 'books, accounts and vouchers' concerning the past year's accounts.

But the actual openness of councils is a less straightforward issue than this regulatory framework might suggest. Critics complain that many decisions are taken, not in open meetings, but in closed 'pre-meetings' of the majority party group, or by the inner circle of senior councillors.<sup>3</sup> The introduction of cabinets – with just a small number of senior councillors taking key decisions – might serve to institutionalise this kind of approach<sup>4</sup>. Several North East Councils have already set up cabinets<sup>5</sup> in advance of

the new Local Government Act. Some of them (such as Darlington, Durham County, Easington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Sedgefield and South Tyneside) have decided not to allow the public or press into their cabinet meetings – mainly on the grounds that to do so would inhibit debate and result in a return to having 'pre-meetings'. On the other hand, some (such as Chester-le-Street, Durham City, Newcastle, Derwentside, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Sunderland) have decided to allow the public and press access, and this may result in more openness than in the past. Much will depend on the scope and vigour of scrutiny committees (similar to Commons Select Committees) which are being established to monitor and question the work of the cabinet; scrutiny committees comprise backbench councillors and are open to the public. A further factor is the role of opposition members – some cabinets include councillors from opposition parties while others consist only of councillors from the majority party.<sup>6</sup>

The Freedom of Information Bill proposes the creation of additional rights to information held by councils. However, the access rights outlined are subject to several broad exemptions. For example, information could be withheld if in the authority's 'reasonable opinion' disclosure would be likely to 'inhibit the free and frank provision of advice', or 'the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation', or 'prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs'. Moreover, information has to be requested rather than being automatically published and will only have to be available within 20 working days, so long as the authority does not claim the information sought as exempt. Above all, the Bill is concerned with creating rights of *access to information*, not rights to *attend decision-making meetings*.<sup>7</sup>

But the key to effective accountability and openness is the interest and vigilance of the public and the media. Low turnouts, public indifference and little or no attendance by the public at most council meetings means councils are under little

local pressure to be more accountable and open. In addition, the local press and other media now report relatively scant information about council decisions and rely on press releases rather than attending and reporting meetings. Local government and local democracy needs to be reinvigorated<sup>8</sup>; at present, most of the pressure for change comes not from the local electorate, however, but from central government.

Many councils are trying to improve the flow of information to the public about their activities and to consult more effectively with local residents. 23 of the 25 councils in the North East now have websites, although these are of variable quality: some are only aimed at promoting tourism or inward investment, but others do include information about the authority's functions, services and policies. Seventeen of them list local councillors. At least one website, Wear Valley, includes committee reports. Better consultation with the public is developing through a variety of mechanisms, ranging from conventional surveys to citizens' juries, neighbourhood committees and focus groups. Further developments and innovation in establishing dialogue between councils and their electorates is to be expected – and is a central element of the government's modernising agenda.

The modernisation of local government is important and necessary, and that includes changes to structures and processes. However, it is hard to see how local government is to be reinvigorated if it continues to lose power, leaving councillors with little clout - undertaking 'an endless round of chores, powers which grow ever more limited, and very few thanks from anyone'.<sup>9</sup> Emasculated local government, largely taken over by central government, is hardly likely to attract the best candidates as councillors, nor encourage the electorate to bother to vote.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on allowances from R. Fenny: *Essential Local Government*, LGC Communications, 1998, pp. 63-4. This source

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provides a useful overview of the mechanisms and structures of local government.

<sup>2</sup> The website of the Local Government Ombudsman is at [www.open.gov.uk/lgo](http://www.open.gov.uk/lgo) This includes summaries of reports on cases investigated as well as information about how the system works.

<sup>3</sup> The government has been particularly critical of traditional ways of making decisions in local councils. In the 1998 White Paper, *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People* (paras 3.4 and 3.5), it is argued that 'significant decisions are, in many councils, taken behind closed doors by political groups or even a small group of key people within the majority group. Consequently, many councillors, even those in the majority group, have little influence over council decisions. Hence, committee meetings which, because the decisions have already effectively been taken, are unproductive'. See also: *Local Leadership, Local Choice*, DETR, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> The *Northern Echo* takes the view that the introduction of cabinets might be used to 'stifle debate, stifle political opposition and keep ordinary people in the dark'. Consequently, in January 2000 the newspaper started a series of articles titled 'Council Watch', pointing to concerns about secrecy and monitoring councils' plans for structural change.

<sup>5</sup> Under current legislation a single party cabinet can have no decision-making powers, and can only make recommendations which have to be endorsed by a separate council committee which includes opposition members. It is expected that the new Local Government Act will give single party cabinets powers of decision. As presently proposed in the Local Government Bill now before Parliament, cabinets will not be required to meet in public - although they can opt to do so. They will only have to publish decisions after they have been taken. The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 does not apply to a cabinet since it is not a council committee.

<sup>6</sup> Information on arrangements and proposals for cabinets in local authorities from the *Northern Echo*, 4.5.2000. Those councils which are allowing opposition councillors to have places on the cabinet include: Chester-le-Street, Middlesbrough, Newcastle and Sunderland. For a detailed discussion on the issues at stake and the approaches taken by

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councils in the North East, see: C. Lloyd, 'Secret passions in the corridors of power', *Northern Echo*, 5.4.2000, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Proposals on access to information, contained in both the Local Government and Freedom of Information Bills, have been criticised by a range of organisations, including Charter 88, the Local Government Information Unit and the Campaign for Freedom of Information. See the Charter 88 website at [www.charter88.org.uk](http://www.charter88.org.uk)

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from 'Those other elections', *The Guardian*, 7.4.2000. This editorial bemoans the decline of local government, comparing its current powers with the much greater powers of councils in Victorian Britain. It is argued there is a need to reverse the decline, 'replacing the current vogue for centralisation with the pluralism that was once one of the prouder traditions of British politics'.

<sup>9</sup> For a concise description and discussion of the present 'dire, almost featureless, political landscape of local government' in the region, see P. Tinnion (1999) *Elected Mayors for the North* (available from 10 Warwick Drive, Whickham, Newcastle upon Tyne NE16 5SG). The author of this pamphlet, who is a Labour councillor in Gateshead and the Northern Organiser of the Co-operative Party, believes that the best way of injecting life (and politics) into local government is by having elected mayors. However, he notes resistance to the idea, especially among the region's councillors (and no firm proposals for a referendum on the issue have yet been put forward within the North East).

## ANNEX 5.1: NORTH EAST COUNCILS AND LEADERS

Listed below are the region's 25 principal councils. Brief information about council leaders has been provided by the leaders themselves or their offices. Where possible, this has been supplemented by additional information from local sources.

### County Councils

Durham County Council  
 County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL  
 Tel: 0191 386 4411  
 Website: [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)  
 Don Robson CBE – Leader (Labour)  
 Born: 1934  
 Career: Former professional footballer, Doncaster Rovers  
 Political Career: Member, Durham County Council 1965-74 and 1979 to the present. Former Deputy Leader, Tyne & Wear County Council, 1974-79.  
 Public positions: Member, Regional Sports Council; Newcastle Airport Co.; North East Regional Assembly; Culture North East. Former Chair, National Cricket Association and Vice-Chair, National Cricket Council.

Northumberland County Council  
 County Hall, Morpeth  
 Northumberland NE61 2EF  
 Tel: 01670 533000  
 Website: [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)  
 Michael Davey – Leader (Labour)  
 Career: Owned a fashion and jewellery business; now Regional General Manager for a national independent company.  
 Political Career: Member, Northumberland County Council since 1988; Leader since 1998.  
 Public positions: Chair, North East Regional Assembly; Association of North East Councils. Founder Chair, Wansbeck Council for Voluntary Service; Wansbeck Community Trust; Northumbria Anti-Apartheid Movement.

### Unitary Authorities

Darlington Borough Council  
 Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT  
 Tel: 01325 380651  
 Website: [www.darlington.org.uk](http://www.darlington.org.uk)  
 John Williams – Leader (Labour)  
 Born: 1947  
 Education: Liverpool College, Middleton St George College  
 Career: Teacher, now retired  
 Political Career: Member, Darlington Borough Council since 1979, Leader since 1991  
 Public positions: Member, Association of North East Councils; Tees Valley Joint Strategy Committee; Darlington Partnership. Board member, Darlington College of Technology. Member of Management Committee, Local Government Information Unit. Former member, Northern Development Co., Durham Police Authority. Deputy Chair, One NorthEast. Vice Chair, Tees Valley Development Co. Non-executive member, South Durham Health Care NHS Trust.  
 Other: Deputy Lieutenant, Co. Durham.

Hartlepool Borough Council  
 Civic Centre, Hartlepool TS24 8AY  
 Tel: 01429 266522  
 Website: [www.hartlepool.gov.uk](http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk)  
 Arthur Preece - Liberal Democrat

Born:  
 Career:  
 Political Career:  
 Public positions:

Middlesbrough Borough Council  
 Town Hall, PO Box 99A,  
 Middlesbrough TS1 2QQ  
 Tel: 01642 245432  
 Website: [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)  
 Ken Walker – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1942  
 Career: PCV Driver. Now retired  
 Political Career: Member, Cleveland County Council, 1985-1996. Member, Middlesbrough Borough Council since 1995; Leader since 1995 and Chair of cabinet since 1999  
 Public positions: Chair, Cleveland Police Authority. Member, National Crime Squad; Association of Police Authorities. Board member, Tees Valley Development Co., Middlesbrough Town Centre Co., Dial A Ride. Director, Local Government Information Unit. Member, Local Government Association. Member, Management Board, Ayresome Industries, 1988-1996. Member, North East Regional Assembly. Former Board member, Bus and Coach Council and former Chair, TGWU National Passenger Industry Committee.

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council  
 Town Hall, Fabian Road,  
 South Bank TS6 9AR  
 Tel: 01642 444000  
 Website: [www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)  
 David Walsh – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1949  
 Education: Teesside Polytechnic/University  
 Career: Formerly in building and civil engineering construction industry  
 Political Career: Member, Cleveland County Council (1985-95). Member Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council since 1995, Leader since 1999.  
 Public positions: Chair, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Committee. Member, North East Regional Assembly. Former Board member, Northern Development Co.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
 Municipal Buildings, Church Street  
 Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD  
 Tel: 01642 393939  
 Website: [www.stockton-bc.gov.uk](http://www.stockton-bc.gov.uk)  
 Bob Gibson – Leader (Labour)  
 Political Career: Member, Stockton Borough Council since 1983 – Leader since 1991 and Chair of Cabinet since 1999. Mayor, 1996/97.

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly; Tees Valley TEC; Tees Valley Development Co (Chair); Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit; Tees Valley Enterprise Co.; Policy Committee of Local Government Association; Urban Commission; Association of North East Councils.

### Metropolitan Borough Councils

#### Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

Civic Centre, Regent Street

Gateshead NE8 1HH

Tel: 0191 477 1011

Website: [www.gateshead.gov.uk](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk)

George Gill CBE – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1934

Career: Electrician, Chopwell Colliery; shift engineer, British Steel, Consett until 1980.

Political Career: Member, Gateshead MBC since 1974; Leader since 1986.

Public positions: Chair, Northumbria Police Authority; Northumbria Community Safety Strategy; Culture North East. Member, EU Committee of the Regions; North East Regional Assembly (former Chair); Local Government International Bureau.

Other: Deputy Lieutenant for Tyne & Wear since 1995.

#### Newcastle City Council

Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 2BN

Tel: 0191 232 8520

Website: [www.newcastle.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk)

Tony Flynn – Leader (Labour)

Education: University of East Anglia; Oxford University (Diploma in Social Studies); Newcastle University (Certificate in Social Work).

Career: Employed by Northumbria Probation Service since 1974

Political Career: Member, Newcastle City Council since 1980; Leader since 1994.

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly; Theatre Royal Trust; International Centre for Life; Grainger Town SRB Partnership (Chair); Newcastle and Gateshead Initiative. Former member, Tyne & Wear Development Corporation; Newcastle City Challenge.

#### North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council

Town Hall, High Street East,

Wallsend NE28 7RU

Tel: 0191 200 6565

Website: [www.northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk)

Rita Stringfellow – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1946

Career: Qualified teacher and social worker. Formerly Team Manager for Early Years Services in a local authority.

Political Career: Member, North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council since 1976; Leader since 1996.

Public positions: Chair of the Board of Newcastle International Airport. Board member, One NorthEast. Former Board member, North Tyneside City Challenge. Chair, Social Affairs and Health Committee, Local Government Association.

## South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council

Town Hall, Westoe Road

South Shields NE33 2RL

Tel: 0191 427 1717

Website: [www.s-tyneside-mbc.gov.uk](http://www.s-tyneside-mbc.gov.uk)

Paul Waggott - Leader (Labour)

Career: Commercial Manager, Durham Sheet Metalworks

Political Career: Member, South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council since 1987;  
Leader since 1997

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly. Board member, South Tyneside Enterprise Partnership; Tyne &amp; Wear Development Co., Tyneside Economic Development Co., Port of Tyne Authority; North of England Assembly of Local Authorities; Northumbria Community Safety Strategy. Governor, Hedworthfield Comprehensive School. Member, Association of Councillors; Local Government Association.

Other: Chair, MSF Union Craft Branch, Jarrow.

## Sunderland City Council

Civic Centre, Sunderland SR2 7DN

Tel: 0191 553 1000

Website: [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk)

Colin Anderson – Leader (Labour)

Career: Civil Servant, Department of Employment, since 1972

Political Career: Member, Sunderland City Council, since 1972; Leader since 1999.

Public positions: Former Chair, Northern Council for Further Education, 1985-87.

Member, North East Regional Assembly.

Other: Fellow, Royal Society of Arts, 1999.

**District Councils**

## Alnwick District Council

Allerburn House, Alnwick

Northumberland NE66 1YY

Tel: 01665 510505

Website: <http://alnwick.northumberland.gov.uk>

John Taylor - Leader

Born: 1936

Career: Estate Management. Writer.

Political Career: Member, Alnwick District Council since 1987.

Public positions: Chair, Northumberland Community Health Council. School governor.

Member, Rail Users Consultative Committee.

## Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council

Council Offices, Wallace Green

Berwick-upon-Tweed

Tel: 01289 330044

Website: [www.berwick-upon-tweed.gov.uk](http://www.berwick-upon-tweed.gov.uk)

William N Ferguson - Leader (Liberal Democrat) and Mayor

Born: 1936

Education: Chester-le-Street Grammar School

Career: Teacher; latterly (1973-96) Deputy Head Teacher, Glendale Middle School. Retired 1996.

Political Career: Member, Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council since 1987. Leader of Liberal Democrat group since 1997; Leader of the Council since 1999. Mayor, 1999-2000.



## Blyth Valley Borough Council

Civic Centre, Blyth

Northumberland NE24 2BX

Tel: 01670 542000

Website: [www.blythvalley.gov.uk](http://www.blythvalley.gov.uk)

David Stephens – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1953

Education: Blyth Grammar School

Career: Dunlop, since 1974; GMBU shop steward

Political Career: Member, Blyth Valley Borough Council since 1991; Leader 1992-96 and since 1998.

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly.

## Castle Morpeth Borough Council

Council Offices, The Kylins

Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2QE

Tel: 01670 514351

Website: [www.castlemorpeth.gov.uk](http://www.castlemorpeth.gov.uk)

Geoff Proudlock – Leader (Independent)

Political career: Member, Castle Morpeth Borough Council since 1991. Leader of the Independent group since 1997 and Leader of the Council's Independent/Liberal Democrat administration since 1999.

## Chester-le-Street District Council

Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street

Co Durham DH3 3UT

Tel: 0191 387 1919

Malcolm Pratt MBE – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1940

Education: Shiney Row School

Career: Free-lance sports journalist since 1994. Previously auditor, Meat and Livestock Commission (1969-94) and National Coal Board (1955-69).

Political Career: Member, Chester-le-Street Urban District Council (1970-74). Member, Chester-le-Street District Council since 1974, Leader since 1991.

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly. Representative, Local Government Association. Director, Local Government Information Unit. Chair of governors, South Pelaw Infants' School; Chester-le-Street C of E Junior School.

Other: President, Philadelphia Cricket Club.

## Derwentside District Council

Civic Centre, Consett

Co Durham DH8 5JA

Tel: 01207 218000

Website: [www.derwentside.org.uk](http://www.derwentside.org.uk)

Alex Watson – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1942

Education: Consett Church School; Newcastle Polytechnic

Career: Mining engineer, fitter and turner. Now retired

Political Career: Member, Derwentside District Council since 1979; Leader since 1992

Public positions: Vice Chair, North East Regional Assembly. Director, Project Genesis Trust; Local Government Information Unit. Manager, Mental Health Priority Trust. Chair, Beechdale Nursery School.

## Durham City Council

Byland Lodge, Hawthorn Terrace

Durham DH1 4TD

Tel: 0191 386 6111

Website: [www.durhamcity.gov.uk](http://www.durhamcity.gov.uk)

Maurice Crathorne MBE – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1936

Education: Kelloe County School; Durham Technical College

Career: Underground worker, National Coal Board 1951-69; Education Welfare Officer, Durham County Council, 1969-95

Political Career: Member, Durham Rural District Council 1964-74; Member, Durham City Council since 1973, Mayor 1993-4, now Leader. Member, Coxhoe Parish Council since 1971.

Public positions: Member and Vice-Chair of Management Committee, Coxhoe Village Hall. Member, North East Regional Assembly.

## Easington District Council

Council Offices, Seaside Lane

Easington, Co Durham SR8 3TN

Tel: 0191 527051

Website: [www.easington.gov.uk](http://www.easington.gov.uk)

Alan Napier - Leader (Labour)

Born: 1954

Education: Qualified electrical technician. Diploma in Social Welfare

Political Career: Member, Easington District Council since 1991; Leader since 1999.

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly.

Other: Murton Mechanics Assistant Secretary and Branch Delegate, National Union of Mineworkers.

## Sedgefield Borough Council

Council Offices, Green Lane,

Spennymoor, Co Durham DL16 6JQ

Tel: 01388 816166

Website: [www.sedgefield.gov.uk](http://www.sedgefield.gov.uk)

Brian Stephens – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1941

Education: All Saints' C of E School, Shildon

Career: Welder: BR Engineering; A J Wild &amp; Co; Dufay Titanine.

Political Career: Member, Shildon Urban District Council 1967-74; Member, Sedgefield BC since 1974 – Leader since 1986

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly; Local Government Association Assembly; Association of Councillors; Association of Direct Labour Organisations. Chair, Shildon SRB Partnership Board. Member, Co Durham and Darlington SRB Programme Partnership Board

## Teesdale District Council

43 Galgate, Barnard Castle

Co Durham DL12 8EL

Tel: 01833 690000

Website: [www.teesdale.gov.uk](http://www.teesdale.gov.uk)

John L Armstrong – Leader (Independent)

Political Career: Member, Teesdale District Council since 1974, Chair, 1975-77, 1980-81, 1997-2000 and Leader. Member, Durham County Council. Member and Chair, Evenwood and Barony Parish Council.

Public positions: Chair of Governors, Butterknowle School; Governor, Toft Hill School. Secretary, Lands Village Hall Association. President, Lands Cricket Club. Vice-President, Lands Young Farmers Club. Vice-Chair, Durham Theatre Co. Member, Teesdale Police Consultative Committee. Member, Durham County Development Co. Former member, Northern Development Co.

Tynedale District Council

Hexham House, Hexham

Northumberland NE46 3NH

Tel: 01434 652200

Website: [www.tynedale.gov.uk](http://www.tynedale.gov.uk)

Bill Garrett - Chair

Career: Post office worker

Public positions: Member, North East Regional Assembly.

Wansbeck District Council

Town Hall, Ashington

Northumberland NE63 8RX

Tel: 01670 814444

John Devon - Leader (Labour)

Born: 1933

Education: Hirst East Secondary Modern School, Ashington

Career: Power Loading Operative, Ashington Colliery, until 1987.

Political Career: Member, Ashington Urban District Council, 1972-4. Member, Wansbeck District Council since 1974, Leader since 1997.

Public positions: Founder member and now national Vice-Chair, Coalfield Communities Campaign. Director, Wansbeck Enterprise Ltd., Northern Coalfields Property Co. and Chair, Wansbeck Energy Co (all non-remunerative positions). Member, North East Regional Assembly.

Wear Valley District Council

Civic Centre, Crook

Co Durham DL15 9ES

Tel: 01388 765555

Website: [www.wearvalley.gov.uk](http://www.wearvalley.gov.uk)

Olive Brown – Leader (Labour)

Born: 1939

Career: Librarian, Durham County Library, until 1995

Political Career: Member, Crook and Willington Urban District Council (1971-73).

Member Wear Valley District Council since 1974, leader since 1995.

Public positions: Member, South Durham Health Care NHS Trust. Former magistrate (1975-87).

## 6. REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The UK has one of the most centralised political systems in Europe, but the power of the centre is now being eroded through devolution to its constituent countries and regions. Since 1997, the government has embarked on a wide-ranging programme of constitutional change that has involved the creation of the Scottish parliament; assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland; the establishment of the Greater London Authority together with an elected mayor; Regional Development Agencies and Regional Chambers. The aspiration for devolution, which has stubbornly survived over the years, has begun to be realised – to the greatest extent in Scotland and to a lesser degree in England.

Like other English regions, the North East has not had its own regional government. But it has a long history of regional organisations which have brought together a variety of interests and sectors (local authorities, business, trade unions) to promote the region and encourage economic growth and development. The North East Development Board, set up in 1935, was the first in a long line of such corporatist bodies<sup>1</sup>, later followed by the North East Development Association, the North East Development Council (NEDC) and then the Northern Development Company (NDC). As well as these promotional and development bodies established from within the region, there have also been attempts at regional planning, supported by central government. Perhaps the best-known of these attempts was the ‘Hailsham Plan’ of 1963, drawn up by civil servants and, to a large extent, eventually implemented. Subsequently, Wilson’s Labour government set up the Northern Economic Planning Council, chaired by Newcastle’s Labour leader, T Dan Smith, which undertook regional planning exercises, notably the strategy set out in *Challenge of the Changing North* (1966). In the 1970s, a complex and comprehensive plan was produced by the Northern Regional Strategy Team; that *Strategic Plan for the Northern Region* (1977) was overtaken by events,

since Conservative governments from 1979 onwards eschewed such intervention.

Today, regionalism is back in favour, is probably more prominent than ever before, and is being taken forward by new institutions and arrangements which go beyond regional promotion and planning. These provide the potential for government activities to be more regionally sensitive and relevant across a range of activities, and also opportunities to develop innovative structures and processes of regional governance. We focus on the three main components of this new regionalism:

- One NorthEast, the Regional Development Agency – concerned primarily with regional economic development and regeneration.
- The Government Office for the North East (GO-NE) – the institutional arrangement for delivering central government policies and administration in the North East.
- The North East Regional Assembly – the Regional Chamber, which works with One NorthEast and which might, ultimately, evolve to form the basis of a directly elected regional-level government.

These institutions are quite new: the Government Office was set up in 1994, while One NorthEast and the Assembly are only a year old. Consequently, they have yet to develop a strong public profile – indeed, most people in the region will have little, if any, awareness of these organisations. Moreover, the relationships between them are still evolving and the future of regionalism is uncertain; still on the sidelines, but possibly becoming more important in the future, are the campaigners for real regional government.

## One NorthEast

A central feature of the government's regionalisation agenda has been the creation of Regional Development Agencies in the eight English regions. The RDAs were proposed in the 1997 White Paper, *Building Partnerships for Prosperity*, given a legislative basis in the 1998 Regional Development Act, and they became operational in April 1999. RDAs are 'Non-Departmental Public Bodies' (the traditional title for quangos), are publicly-funded and accountable via ministers to parliament. Their Board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

The RDAs are intended to 'provide effective, and properly co-ordinated regional economic development and regeneration, and will enable the English regions to improve their relative competitiveness'. Development agencies are not new in the UK – Welsh and Scottish development agencies have existed for over two decades – but the new RDAs go further, combining an economic development role with a wider government commitment to the regions and to devolving some decision-making down to the regional level. The government has agreed that where there is popular demand for directly-elected regional government (expressed through a regional referendum) these structures could eventually be used as a springboard to devolution to elected regional government.

At its formation, each RDA has sought to establish a profile and a 'brand' name, in some cases prosaic ('East Midlands Development Agency'), in others aspirational ('Yorkshire Forward' and 'Advantage West Midlands'). In the North East, the RDA has chosen the name 'One NorthEast', which is intended to encapsulate the region's history and reputation for partnership and consensus, and to promote the idea of a 'can-do' culture.

**Roles.** One NorthEast has, essentially, four roles: strategy, management, development and influence. Given its statutory remit to promote and co-ordinate economic development, it has a *strategic* responsibility

for the co-ordination and integration of: economic development and regeneration; business efficiency, investment and competitiveness; skills, training and employment; and sustainable development. In order to judge the performance of One NorthEast and the other RDAs, the government has identified 14 core indicators which cover both the 'state of the region' and the activity of the agency itself.

In terms of *management*, One NorthEast now has responsibility for the funding, administration and delivery of a range of activities and programmes previously undertaken by other organisations. These include:

- The Single Regeneration Budget – steering and management of this programme, taken over from Government Office-North East.
- Rural Development Programme – steering and management of the three RDPs, taken over from the Rural Development Commission.
- Partnership Investment Programme – One NorthEast has taken over the management of this Programme from English Partnerships.

It also has a *development* role, incorporating the following activities:

- Regional regeneration – One NorthEast has absorbed the regional functions of English Partnerships (a physical development and renewal quango which had grown out of the former English Estates). Also the agency now has responsibility for the City Grant and Land Reclamation Programmes, formerly managed by the Department of Environment.
- Rural regeneration – the work of the Rural Development Commission in the North East has been absorbed into One NorthEast.
- Inward investment – One NorthEast has taken over responsibility for promoting

inward investment from the Northern Development Company, formerly the region's promotional agency.

One NorthEast had 212 staff transferred from source organisations at its inception in April 1999 and a budget this year (2000/01) of £148.6m. Of this, by far the largest amount, £91m, is absorbed by the SRB programme. It has limited capacity to achieve its ambitious aim of transforming the region into 'one of the most dynamic and forward-looking regions in the UK', and therefore many other organisations need to be involved. Hence, a key role is to *influence* other agencies and stakeholders in areas such as education, transport, health, housing, tourism, planning and European programmes. This role is seen as vital in producing a 'joined-up' approach to tackling the region's problems and is to be underpinned by agreements or 'compacts' between One NorthEast and other agencies such as the universities, colleges and the NHS.

**Strategy.** One of the first and most important tasks of each of the new RDAs has been to draw up a Regional Economic Strategy, setting out aims and objectives and how they are to be achieved. One NorthEast published its Strategy, called *Unlocking Our Potential*, in October 1999. This reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the region in relation to the challenges of competing in a global economy and went on to identify six priorities for the next ten years:

1. Creating wealth by building a diversified, knowledge-driven economy.
2. Establishing a new entrepreneurial culture.
3. Building an adaptable and highly skilled workforce.
4. Placing Universities and Colleges at the heart of the North East economy.
5. Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century transport, communication and property needs.
6. Accelerating the renaissance of the North East.

The production of the Strategy was regarded as an important process in itself, involving widespread consultation (much more than in previous regional planning exercises) in an

effort to build consensus in the region. For the most part, it was well-received and welcomed by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). The Department did, however, point to weaknesses in relation to its lack of analysis of social conditions and inadequate response to the problems of social exclusion. In the North East, as in other regions, the Strategy is principally concerned with economic development rather than with regeneration - even though most of the Agency's budget is supposedly earmarked for regeneration.<sup>2</sup>

Progress in implementing the Strategy is to be measured against a set of 28 indicators linked to four broad objectives - economic growth, social progress, environmental protection and prudent use of natural resources. Implementation of the Strategy involves not only One NorthEast but also many other agencies and, in particular, four sub-regional 'Development Partnerships', each chaired by senior councillors. The Development Partnership for County Durham is chaired by Don Robson, leader of Durham County Council; Northumberland's Partnership is chaired by County Councillor John Whiteman; in Tyne and Wear, Newcastle City Council leader Tony Flynn is the chair; and in Tees Valley, Bob Gibson, leader of Stockton Borough Council chairs the Development Partnership.

These Development Partnerships are considered by One NorthEast to be of fundamental importance in ensuring delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy in these areas. In addition, each is expected to draw up their own strategies that will influence, as well as be influenced by, the Regional Economic Strategy as it evolves in the future.

**Who runs One NorthEast?** All the Regional Development Agencies are run by Boards, whose 13 members are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (currently John Prescott). Each Board has a chair who is expected to provide leadership and be heavily involved in the work of the agency.

Dr John Bridge, chief executive of the Northern Development Company, was chosen to chair One NorthEast in July 1998. In many ways he was the most obvious choice, having been head of NDC for a decade, well-known in the region and with considerable knowledge and experience of the region's problems and potential. Chairs of RDAs, including Dr Bridge, are expected to make a minimum commitment of two days a week working for the agency, and receive remuneration of £44,000 a year. However, RDA Chairs found that more time had to be devoted to their work in the first year and, consequently, they have received an additional £11,000 to cover a third day per week between November 1999 and April 2000. This increase may well have legitimately reflected the additional commitment required, but nonetheless prompted some criticism in the North East.

RDA Boards are intended to be business-led, but also include a range of other regional stakeholders drawn from such sectors as local government, education, trade unions, community and voluntary organisations, environmental groups and rural organisations. The DETR issued guidance on the need to ensure adequate representation of women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities and increased the number of places on these Boards from an initial 12 to 13 to help achieve more balanced membership.

The selection of individuals to be appointed to the RDAs was conducted in various ways. In the North East, a panel was convened comprising the newly-appointed Chair, Dr Bridge, senior officials from Government Office-North East and recruitment advisors from Price Waterhouse Coopers. Over a period of nine months, the panel considered more than 100 candidates, then made detailed recommendations to the minister for his final selection and decision. On the whole, the process was more open, more considered and more meritocratic than had been the case, for example, of appointments to Urban Development Corporations in the 1980s. There was also a great deal more commitment to diversity, bringing together a mix of people with different experiences, skills and abilities.

The Board of One NorthEast (Annex 6.1) represents a balance of backgrounds and interests. In terms of 'functional' representation, the region's key 'stakeholders' are on the Board, with individuals from local government (John Williams, Philip Hughes, Rita Stringfellow and former councillor John McCormack); members with private sector backgrounds (Alistair Arkley, Richard Maudsley, Miles Middleton and Sue Wilson); a University Vice Chancellor (Professor Derek Fraser); Barbara Dennis from the voluntary sector and Kevin Curran from the trade unions. The Board also balances urban and rural interests, and geographical representation from the different sub-regions of the North East. The expertise of members spans a variety of fields, including economic and industrial development, industrial relations, education, housing, the environment, media and culture, social affairs and Europe. Most of them have had, in one way or another, experience of regional development issues and have served on similar bodies. Some served on One NorthEast's predecessor organisation, the Northern Development Company and others on TECs. But they are not all 'the usual suspects'.

As with the other RDAs, there is an under-representation of women on One NorthEast's Board (only three out of 13) and there is only one member from the minority ethnic communities. It is questionable whether One NorthEast really is 'business-led', since only five of the 13 can be said to be managers, or former managers, of large private businesses; however, others are managers of public sector 'businesses'. Some critics have pointed to the absence of Conservative and Liberal Democrat politicians and the lack of representation from the small business sector. Nevertheless, compared with many quangos, the Board of One NorthEast appears to be reasonably representative of the community it serves.

Board members are appointed for a period of three years and are required to make a minimum commitment of two days a month to the agency's business. They receive remuneration of £7000 a year. They are

expected to make an effective and active contribution to the work of One NorthEast, to identify closely with the region and command the respect of people involved in the region's economic activity and development. The board has responsibility for programmes, budgets, strategies, plans and monitoring. As in other public bodies, members have to declare interests and to specify those interests in a register, which is available for public inspection at the offices of One NorthEast.<sup>3</sup>

But, in spite of its concern to consult and achieve consensus, the Board meetings of One NorthEast are not open to the public, nor are the minutes and papers of those meetings publicly available. Much of the information given out by One NorthEast is self-promotional or is in the form of announcements about projects - information which does not readily form the basis for discussion, debate or criticism. It is expected, however, that there may be more opportunities for debate once the Corporate Plan is published and the Regional Economic Strategy is reviewed. Its website offers little information, even about the organisation and its structure (and is now, in April 2000, unavailable and being reconstructed). It is perhaps unsurprising that, so far, One NorthEast has struggled to build an identity in the region.

### **The Government Office for the North East (GO-NE)**

Integrated Regional Offices were set up in 1994 by the Conservative government to co-ordinate the work of several government departments in the English regions. These outposts of central government remain important in spite of the establishment of RDAs. In the North East, GO-NE embraces the work of the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions; the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Education and Employment. The Home Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) are also represented; the Home Office staff have particularly promoted their department's policies in regeneration programmes and an officer from the DCMS acts as a facilitator for the new Regional Cultural Consortium.

GO-NE has lead responsibilities for housing, planning, European funding, transport, education, skills development, neighbourhood regeneration and social exclusion. This involves a variety of individual programmes and strategies, such as the most recent regeneration initiative, New Deal for Communities, and Housing Investment Programmes, Regional Selective Assistance, Regional Planning Guidance, EU Objective 2 programmes and local transport capital programmes. GO-NE also has a key role in feeding back information to the government and monitoring government programmes, including overseeing the work of One NorthEast.

GO-NE is staffed by civil servants and led by a Regional Director, Dr Bob Dobbie. Although it has lost some functions and staff to One NorthEast, it still has more staff (251 staff) than the agency and a larger budget. It is a major element in the governance of the region. Those favouring more democratic regional structures argue that this unelected body of officials is difficult to challenge or hold to account and ought to be made accountable to the region's politicians.

There is evident overlap between GO-NE and One NorthEast and an effective partnership between them is vitally important. In the case of regeneration, for example, One NorthEast has responsibility for the Single Regeneration Budget programme while responsibility for the New Deal for Communities programme lies with GO-NE. And both organisations will need to co-operate closely in developing a coherent regional approach to tackling social exclusion. This is a lead responsibility of GO-NE but has recently been identified by the government as an issue which One NorthEast has also to address. Similarly, sustainable economic development is a key aim in One NorthEast's Regional Economic Strategy, while the promotion of sustainable development, and the convening of the region's 'Sustainable Development Round Table', is a GO-NE responsibility. The relationship between the two organisations is still evolving and it is made more complicated by the administrative requirement that GO-NE monitors and



regulates the performance and spending of One NorthEast.

It appears likely that the role of GO-NE will be developed and strengthened in the future. The government's Performance and Innovation Unit has recently reviewed the work of the Government Offices<sup>4</sup> and wants to see them extend their responsibilities to include the development of cross-cutting strategies for local areas, particularly in relation to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration, and to foster more effective inter-departmental action and collaboration. It is also suggested that this 'joined-up government' should be complemented by a clear statement or 'concordat' setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Government Office, the RDA and the Regional Chamber in each region. In the North East, such a concordat between the regional agencies (see below) has recently been produced and agreed.

GO-NE, based at Wellbar House in Gallowgate, Newcastle, produces an annual report (which appears to have a narrow circulation) and has a press office which sends out press notices and responds to media enquiries. It communicates to government in London and to institutions in the region, but communicates very little information to the region's public. GO-NE has recently set up a website; it was the last Government Office for the Regions to do so.<sup>5</sup>

### **The North East Regional Assembly**

The 1997 White Paper, *Building Partnerships for Prosperity*, which set out the government's plans for RDAs also had proposals for the creation of 'Regional Chambers'. These were envisaged as voluntary groupings of local councillors and representatives from other organisations and interests such as the private sector, education and training, trade unions, health services, and culture, media and sport. The local authority element would predominate, and should reflect political balance and the different types of local authority in the region. Membership should also be large enough to ensure wide representation of other interests. However, the government

was not prescriptive and the new Chambers could involve representatives from any sector or organisation considered appropriate in a particular region.

The RDAs are principally accountable to the government. It was envisaged that the Chambers would help balance this, helping to make RDAs more responsive to regional views and providing them with an opportunity to give an account of their work to regional stakeholders. Thus, each RDA would be expected to take account of the Chamber's views when preparing its Regional Economic Strategy and would consult the Chamber on its corporate plan. An RDA would thus be open to some form of scrutiny by the Chamber. The government also noted the potential for a wider role for these Regional Chambers in relation to the preparation of regional planning guidance and a regional sustainable development strategy – but the government was willing to allow individual regions to decide how their Chamber might be involved.

The freedom allowed by the government to develop Chambers that reflected distinctive regional aspirations and circumstances was well received in the North East, where an existing body, the Association of North East Councils<sup>6</sup> was able to provide the framework from which the North East Chamber was to develop. In February 1999, after months of discussion and negotiation between the Association and other organisations in the region, a formal bid for the designation of the North East Regional Chamber was submitted to the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions and was accepted. The functions of the new body are:

- To advise and inform One NorthEast on any issue which falls within the latter's competence
- To receive and consider regular reports from One NorthEast
- To scrutinise One NorthEast's Regional Economic Strategy and Corporate Plan

- To encourage the consideration of relevant social, economic and environmental issues at the regional level, where this is appropriate
- To liaise and to work in collaboration with regional institutions and other appropriate organisations.
- To offer a regional view to the government, the EU institutions etc. on any issue or area falling within the Chamber's competence
- To encourage and promote a strong sense of regional identity
- To provide a forum for considering and debating any issue or policy proposals having an impact on the people of the North East of England

Shortly after its designation, members of the Chamber agreed to change its name to the 'North East Regional Assembly' – a move which would appear to anticipate the possibility of regional elected government.

There are 63 seats on the North East Regional Assembly, of which altogether 44 places (70%) are allocated to the democratically elected sector; 42 are local councillors (including many of the leaders of the region's councils), with one MP and one MEP. The 42 local authority members comprise two councillors from each County Council, Metropolitan District and Unitary Council, and one from each of the region's District Councils, *plus* five other councillors to give more political balance (Annex 6.2). 34 of the councillors are Labour, four are Liberal Democrat, there are two Conservatives and two are Independent members. One of the councillors, Michael Davey, Leader of Northumberland County Council, is Chair of the Assembly. The remaining 19 members, 'regional stakeholders', comprise five representatives from the private sector, five from the trade unions, two from the voluntary sector and one each from higher education, further education, culture, sport and tourism, rural interests, health and the environment. One of the private sector representatives, Bill Midgley

of the North East Chamber of Commerce, is the Assembly's Vice-Chair.

When the Assembly was formally established in June 1999, the then minister Richard Caborn raised concerns about its membership and, in particular, the gender balance. Only 12% of its members were women. And there was only one member from the minority ethnic communities. The minister concluded that it 'clearly has some way to go in achieving an appropriate gender balance and we would expect it to do better in the future. We propose to keep membership under review and expect to see steady progress in this area'.

The Assembly has three modes of operation: a full plenary (of all 63 members) meeting at least four times a year; an executive committee which co-ordinates policy and takes decisions on matters as agreed by the full Assembly; and a number of sector forums to focus on specific themes such as regional development, social issues, regional promotion and inclusivity. Meetings are open to the public and all documents are in the public domain.

Administrative support and core staff for the Assembly are provided by the 'parent' body, the Association of North East Councils, whose director, Stephen Barber, is also director of the new Assembly. The government is not contributing to its running costs, which will largely be met by the region's local authorities. The Association and the Assembly have now agreed to have a joint budget – a recognition of the central position of the local authorities in the Assembly and a way of ensuring the Assembly is adequately resourced and supported.

### **Working in partnership: the Regional Concordat**

The three institutions of regional governance do not easily fit together. Their roles are not very clear, there is overlap, there are different accountabilities and it will, in any case, take time for them to become settled and established in their roles. One NorthEast, in particular, is struggling to combine its constituent parts, drawn from

several former agencies and still scattered across a number of locations. And, they are all different kinds of organisations; One NorthEast is a quango; GO-NE is a government bureaucracy; and the Assembly is a voluntary grouping of indirectly elected and appointed people.

In an attempt to begin to clarify matters and foster co-operation and partnership, the three organisations have recently signed a 'concordat' declaring that they 'will work together to help improve the economic performance of the North East region, to enhance the region's environment and to improve the social well-being of all citizens within the region'. The concordat sets out common values – commitment to the region as a whole, openness and honesty, partnership and sharing, flexibility, and the minimisation of bureaucracy and duplication. There is agreement on common aims:

- Developing a common vision for improving the economic, environmental and social prospects for the region's citizens
- Developing complementary and mutually consistent strategies
- Integrating (as far as possible) implementation plans
- Using monitoring to develop a shared understanding of what is being achieved
- Developing a joint intention to keep strategies and plans under review, with flexible mechanisms to enable changes in direction

This is no doubt welcome, but it remains to be seen how far these hopes of working together can be fulfilled. There may be more 'joined-up' policy, but under current arrangements it is unclear who speaks for the region – and with what legitimacy.

### **The future: regional government?**

Within the North East there is some interest in moving beyond present arrangements and

creating a regional government, led by a *directly elected* regional assembly. There is probably more support for this kind of devolution in the North East than in other English regions but, even here, there is limited enthusiasm. The case is being made and promoted particularly by two interconnected lobby groups, the Campaign for a North East Assembly and the North East Constitutional Convention. The Constitutional Convention has a steering committee which includes the Bishop of Durham (Michael Turnbull), the Chair of the Northern TUC (Gill Hale), local Labour MPs (Derek Foster and Frazer Kemp), Northern Liberal Democrats (Peter Maughan) and, from the voluntary sector, Sue Pearson of Age Concern.

The Constitutional Convention has recently drawn up a detailed blueprint, *Time for a Change: the Case for a new North East Assembly*<sup>7</sup>. It is argued that the creation of an elected assembly will 'improve the efficiency of governance, make it more accountable and in the process strengthen the region's voice'. The main features of the model of regional government proposed by the Convention are as follows:

- Creating a 30-40 member assembly, elected under a proportional voting system, with strategic responsibility for planning, economic development, training, transport, arts and culture and able to exert influence over health and education. While the assembly would not deliver policies directly, its policy development role in ensuring joined-up government would require access to a single block grant from central government.
- Creating a parallel Civic Forum, comprising representatives of civic organisations from all parts of the region, which would allow citizens to work in partnership with the assembly.
- Transforming GO-NE into an executive secretariat for the assembly and forum, which would also enter into regional public service agreements with specialist executive agencies in areas

such as economic development, arts and culture, environment and training.

The case is being made, but it is far from clear that a regional referendum, if it were held, would give it support. In view of the weaknesses of democratic processes in the region, and the apparent apathy and lack of interest, it is unlikely that the public can easily be convinced of the need for another tier of government. The reinvigoration of democracy in the existing structures of governance in the North East will have to come first.

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<sup>1</sup> For a history of regional institutions, see: J. Cousins, R. Davies, M. Paddon and A. Waton (1974) 'Aspects of Contradiction in Regional Policy: The Case of the North East', *Regional Studies*, 8, pp. 133-144.

<sup>2</sup> For a critique of RDAs and their Regional Economic Strategies, see: B. Robson, J. Peck and A. Holden (2000) *Regional Agencies and Area-based Regeneration*, The Policy Press.

<sup>3</sup> The interests of the Chair of One NorthEast have recently attracted a considerable amount of damaging criticism. Dr Bridge served as a non-executive director of Greater London Enterprise, a development organisation owned by the London local authorities. This interest had been declared and had been included in press coverage when he was appointed to One NorthEast in 1998. In February 2000, the region's press focused on this connection and claimed it was in conflict with his position in the North East. There was hostile comment from some public figures in the region. Subsequently, Dr Bridge - who argued there was no conflict - resigned his position at Greater London Enterprise.

<sup>4</sup> Performance and Innovation Unit (2000), *Reaching Out: The Role of Central Government at Regional and Local Level*. This is available at: [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation/1999/regions](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation/1999/regions)

<sup>5</sup> The Government Offices for the Regions have a website, with general information, at [www.government-offices.gov.uk](http://www.government-offices.gov.uk). This has links to the websites of the various regional offices; GO-NE is at [www.go-ne.gov.uk](http://www.go-ne.gov.uk). The full address of GO-NE is: Wellbar House, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4TD, and there is a 'helpline' – 0191 201 3300.

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<sup>6</sup> The Association of North East Councils is based at the Guildhall, Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3AF (tel: 0191 261 7388). This Association (formerly called the North of England Assembly of Local Authorities and, before that, the Northern Region Councils Association) grew out of the North of England County Councils Association (NECCA) which was originally set up in 1978 as a body to represent the region and to monitor implementation of the (ill-fated) Strategic Plan for the Northern Region.

<sup>7</sup> *Time for a Change: The Case for a New North East Assembly*, published by the North East Constitutional Convention (140/150 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6TH, tel: 0191 245 0825). The Campaign for a North East Assembly (which was set up before the Constitutional Convention but is closely allied to it) can be contacted at 37 Kingsley Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5AN, tel: 0191 265 8158. The Campaign and the Convention have recently joined with similar groups in other regions to form the 'Campaign for the English Regions'. In May 2000, the Campaign for a North East Assembly reported that, in answer to a letter sent to MPs, most MPs in the region support both a 'powerful devolved government' for the North East and an 'early referendum to put that demand to the test'. The regional Labour Party and Liberal Democrats also support such proposals.

## **ANNEX 6.1 ONE NORTHEAST (THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY)**

**Great North House, Sandyford Road**

**Newcastle upon Tyne**

**Tel: 0191 261 2000**

**Website: [www.onenortheast.co.uk](http://www.onenortheast.co.uk)**

### **Board members:**

#### **Dr John Bridge (Chair)**

Aged 57. Former Chief Executive, Northern Development Co. (1988-99). Previously at North of England Development Council (1975-85) and Chief Executive, Yorks and Humberside Development Association (1985-88). Formerly Lecturer in economics at Durham University. Board member of Team General Partnerships Ltd (supervising Midland Bank Equity Fund for the North). Chair, Regional Committee Understanding Industry. Director, British Trade International. Former positions include: non-executive director, Greater London Enterprise; Northern Region Sports Council; The Newcastle Initiative.

#### **Councillor John Williams (Deputy Chair)**

Aged 53. Retired teacher. Member Darlington Borough Council since 1979 and Leader since 1991. Vice-Chair, Tees Valley Development Co. Non-executive member, South Durham Health Care NHS Trust. Board member, Darlington College of Technology. Former Board member, Northern Development Co. and Durham Police Authority.

#### **Alistair Arkley**

Aged 53. Managing Director, Century Inns. Board member, Tees Valley TEC; Teesside Business Link; Tees Valley Development Co., Northern Business Forum.

#### **Kevin Curran**

Aged 45. Northern regional secretary of the GMB Union since 1997. Previously regional organiser, GMB Southern Region.

#### **Barbara Dennis**

Aged 38. Director of Norcare (a charity providing housing and services for vulnerable people). Formerly regional manager, National Federation of Housing Associations (1990-93) and development officer, North East Black Housing Development Project (1993-94).

#### **Professor Derek Fraser**

Aged 60. Vice-Chancellor of Teesside University since 1992. Formerly professor of history at the University of Bradford and at UCLA; inspector of schools; Staff Inspector for Higher Education; Assistant/Deputy Principal at Sheffield City Polytechnic. Board member, Tees Valley TEC; Teesside Tomorrow. Director, Future Steps (Careers Service).

#### **Councillor Phillip Hughes**

Aged 52. Manager of Teesdale Citizens' Advice Bureau since 1988. Part-time hill farmer. Formerly RAF pilot (1965-78). Independent member, Teesdale District Council since 1991. Member, Durham Rural Community Council; North Pennines AONB Partnership. Director, Groundwork West Durham. Chair, Board of Visitors at HMYOI Deerbolt.

#### **Richard Maudsley**

Aged 53. Former Managing Director, NEI Parsons (1985-92) and Rolls-Royce Industrial Power Group (1992-97). Member, Export Guarantees Advisory Council; North East Industrial Development Board. Member of the Council of Newcastle University.

**John McCormack**

Aged 51. Member of Wansbeck District Council, and Leader, until May 1999. Former Chair, North of England Assembly of Local Authorities (1996-98). Formerly an engineering worker at NEI Reyrolle. Part-time lecturer at Northumberland College since 1992. Previously member, Northern Development Co. Has been a member of several European groups, including the Assembly of European Regions and North Sea Commission.

**David Miles Middleton CBE**

Aged 61. Chair, Rural Development Commission and Board member of the Countryside Agency. Chair, Northern Enterprise Ltd. Formerly a senior partner with Coopers and Lybrand. Past President, Teesside Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Northern Society of Chartered Accountants; Association of British Chambers of Commerce. Former Director, North West Chambers of Commerce Association.

**Hugh Morgan Williams**

Aged 47. Chair and Chief Executive, Canford Group plc. Vice-Chair, CBI Northern Regional Council. Chair, Galaxy Radio. Former radio journalist. Board member, Sunderland City TEC. Member of North East Industrial Board. Member, Council of Newcastle University. Former member, Northern Development Co.

**Councillor Rita Stringfellow**

Aged 54. Leader of North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council since 1996. Teacher and social worker. Chair of the Local Government Association's Social Affairs and Health Committee. Former Board member, North Tyneside City Challenge. Chair of the Board of Newcastle International Airport.

**Sue Wilson**

Aged 47. Currently a freelance journalist. Former personnel director, Vickers Defence Systems and then Chief Executive of The Newcastle Initiative (1995-97). Formerly Board member, Newcastle West End City Challenge and RVI NHS Hospital Trust. Governor, University of Northumbria.

**Sources:** *The Journal*, 23.3.99 and *Northern People 2000* (supplement published by the *Northern Echo*).

**ANNEX 6.2 NORTH EAST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
(THE REGIONAL CHAMBER)  
The Guildhall, Quayside  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3AF  
Tel: 0191 261 7388**

**Plenary members (February 2000)**

**Councillors - council representation**

Alnwick DC - Councillor S E Bolam (Ind)  
Berwick upon Tweed BC - Councillor D McClymont (LibDem)  
Blyth Valley BV - Councillor David C Stephens (Lab)  
Castle Morpeth BC - Councillor G N Weatherly (Ind)  
Chester le Street DC - Councillor Malcolm Pratt MBE (Lab)  
Darlington BC - Councillor D A Lyonette (Lab), Councillor E J Lister (Lab)  
Derwentside DC - Councillor Alex Watson (Lab)  
Durham CC - Councillor Bob Pendlebury (Lab), Councillor Don Robson (Lab)  
Durham DC - Councillor Maurice Crathorne MBE (Lab)  
Easington DC - Councillor Alan Napier (Lab)  
Gateshead MBC - Councillor David Bollands (Lab), Councillor George Gill CBE (Lab)  
Hartlepool BC - Councillor H Clouth (Lab), Councillor Russell Hart (Lab)  
Middlesbrough BC - Councillor S Connolly (Lab), Councillor Ken Walker (Lab)  
Newcastle upon Tyne MBC - Councillor Tony Flynn (Lab), Councillor Kevan D Jones (Lab)  
North Tyneside MBC - Councillor E Darke (Lab), Councillor A Richardson (Lab)  
Northumberland CC - Councillor Michael Davey (Lab) (Chair), Councillor D Luke (Lab)  
Redcar & Cleveland BC – Councillor V T Collins (Lab), Councillor David Walsh (Lab)  
Sedgefield BC – Councillor Brian Stephens (Lab)  
South Tyneside MBC – Councillor J R Temple (Lab), Councillor Paul Waggott (Lab)  
Stockton on Tees BC – Councillor P C Andrew (Lab), Councillor Bob Gibson (Lab)  
Sunderland MBC – Councillor Colin R Anderson (Lab), Councillor B Charlton (Lab)  
Teesdale DC – Councillor G K Robinson (Lab)  
Tynedale DC – Councillor Bill Garrett (Lab)  
Wansbeck DC – Councillor John Devon (Lab)  
Wear Valley DC - Councillor Neil Stonehouse (Lab)

**Councillors – minority party co-options**

Councillor Suzanne Fletcher MBE (LibDem) Stockton on Tees BC  
Councillor Chris Foote Wood (LibDem) Wear Valley DC  
Councillor S A C Oliver (Con) Northumberland CC  
Councillor E A Richmond OBE (Con) Darlington BC  
Councillor N G Rippeth (LibDem) Gateshead MBC

**Member of the European Parliament**

Vacant

**Member of Parliament**

John Cummings, MP (Easington)

**‘Regional Stakeholders’**

Culture, media and sport – Ms Sue Underwood (Director, NE Museums Service)

Environment – Dr Richard Cresswell (Environment Agency)

Further Education – Mr J Wells (North Tyneside College)

Health – Mr Joe Mills OBE (Chair, Sunderland Health Authority)

Higher Education – Professor Peter Fidler MBE (Vice-Chancellor, Sunderland University)

Private Business – Mrs M Drysdale (North East Workforce Ltd), J Irwin (Storey, Sons & Parker),  
Mr P McKendrick, Mr Bill Midgley (North East Chamber of Commerce), Mr Simon J Still  
(Northern Business Forum)

Rural – Mr I Brown (Farmer)

Trade Unions – Mr J Ahmadi (North Shields People’s Centre), Ms S Guy (Regional Secretary,  
TGWU), Ms Gill Hale (UNISON), Mr D McGregor, Ms M E Panton (Northern TUC)

Training & Enterprise Councils - vacant

Voluntary Sector – Ms Alma Caldwell (Chief Executive, Age Concern), Mr Terry Morton  
(North of England Co-operative Council)

*Source:* North East Regional Assembly. (For biographical information on those councillors who are council leaders, see Annex 5.1.)



## 7. THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

The NHS is one of Britain's biggest and most cherished public sector institutions. Founded in 1948, the NHS offers health care to everyone and the vast majority of people rely solely on this provision. It is subject to criticism and seems frequently on the verge of crisis, but is highly regarded and commands a great deal of popular support. It has a high political profile: all political parties seek to reassure the public that the NHS is safe in their hands and promise increased resources.

The NHS is a huge organisation, complex and unwieldy. Planned expenditure for 2000/01 amounts to £54.2bn, accounting for about 14% of public spending, and the NHS directly employs more than three-quarters of a million people. It is subject to very considerable pressures – delivering a universal service, free of charge, and attempting to meet continually expanding demands while operating within tight budgetary constraints. Successive governments have sought to control costs and raise efficiency in the NHS, their attempts shaped by politics and ideology.

Over the past 25 years, efforts have been made to change and improve the NHS by reforming its structures. Structural change has become characteristic of the NHS, with the 'continuous revolution initiated by the Thatcher government [now] perpetuated under the Blair government'.<sup>1</sup>

### Structures

To begin to make sense of the current structures – and identify who runs the NHS – it is helpful to review its evolution. From 1948 to 1974, the NHS was administered by a combination of Executive Councils (for GPs and other primary care services); Boards and Management Committees running hospitals; and Local Authorities responsible for environmental and personal community health services (and including a local Medical Officer of Health). This tripartite structure, rooted in arrangements

before Nationalisation, was overseen by the Ministry of Health, with the minister ultimately accountable to Parliament.

Major reforms in 1974 created a more unified structure, establishing a hierarchy which was intended to be more efficient and effective – but which generated considerable bureaucracy. The Department of Health and Social Security managed Regional Health Authorities which were charged with the strategic planning of services, below them were Area Health Authorities and Family Practitioner Committees and, at the local level, District Management Teams. Area Health Authorities had responsibility for planning and management of services, while Family Practitioner Committees administered the contracts of GPs, dentists, pharmacists and opticians. Community Health Councils were also introduced to represent consumer interests. In 1982 this structure was rationalised, with the establishment of District Health Authorities, merging the functions of Area Health Authorities and District Management Teams.

In the 1980s the Conservative government, concerned to restrain the growth of public expenditure, sought greater efficiency in the NHS, which was to be achieved by making it more 'business-like'. Proposals presented in the White Paper, *Working for Patients* (1989) led to massive structural changes, introduced through the NHS and Community Care Act (1990). The central feature was the division of NHS roles into *purchasers* and *providers* of services and the consequent development of the 'internal market' to obtain the supposed benefits of competition.

The Department of Health (split off from Social Security in 1988) and the NHS Management Executive would oversee Regional Health Authorities. Below them, were the local purchasers of health care: the District Health Authorities and new Family Health Service Authorities (which replaced the Family Practitioner Committees). This structure was subsequently rationalised; in 1996 Regional Health Authorities were

abolished, their role essentially taken over by Regional Offices of the NHS Executive, and the District Health Authorities and Family Health Service Authorities were merged to become unified Health Authorities. The big change, however, under these reforms was the creation of NHS Trusts, self-governing organisations providing health services. By the mid-1990s, virtually all hospitals, almost all community services, mental health and ambulance services were run by NHS Trusts. In addition, GPs were given new freedoms to purchase services for their patients by becoming 'fundholders'. All this constituted a radical shake-up of the NHS, bringing about considerable <sup>cultural</sup> change – but probably resulting in quite limited improvements in efficiency and service quality.<sup>2</sup>

Since 1997 the Labour government has embarked on yet more change, based on a 'Third Way' – a compromise between old top-down managerialism and the Conservatives' market approach. Labour's White Paper, *The New NHS: Modern, Dependable* (1997), set out principles and a long-term agenda for change, including structural changes which are now being implemented. The division between purchasers and providers is being retained, as are the NHS Trusts, but the emphasis is now on collaboration, partnership, raising quality and improving performance: 'comparing not competing'. Health Authorities have been given a clearer and more substantial public health role, providing strategic leadership at the local level and collaborating with NHS Trusts and other agencies, particularly Local Authorities, to develop Health Improvement Programmes (HImPS), assess needs and plan services. In some areas, Health Action Zones have been set up, involving a partnership approach to improving health in specific localities.<sup>3</sup>

The most significant innovation is the creation of local Primary Care Groups to purchase services for groups of GP practices and the consequent abolition of GP fundholding. The idea is to extend the flexibilities and benefits of fundholding to all GPs, thus removing the inequities which

had emerged between fundholding and non-fundholding GP practices. Primary Care Groups (each covering groupings of around 50 GPs) are supported by and accountable to Health Authorities and can, in future, become freestanding Trusts, both commissioning and eventually also providing health services. They will become increasingly important, key agencies in the move towards ensuring primary care has a central position in the NHS.

The current structure of the NHS is shown in Figure 7.1. The Secretary of State for Health heads the Department of Health. Within the Department is the *NHS Executive*, responsible for implementing policy and monitoring the performance of the NHS. The NHS Executive has eight regional offices in England, each with an appointed non-executive Chair and a group of civil servants. The regional offices oversee the *Health Authorities* (100 in England) and also the providers of services, the *NHS Trusts* (420 in England). The Health Authorities have been instrumental in setting up the new *Primary Care Groups*; at present, these are committees of the Health Authorities, most having an advisory role, some with devolved responsibility for their budget, but as from April 2000 they have been able to apply to the Department of Health to become freestanding Trusts. These Trusts will take responsibility for commissioning the majority of hospital services, and will eventually also be major providers – supplanting existing NHS Trusts providing community services. There are altogether 481 Primary Care Groups in England.

<sup>1</sup> C. Ham (1999) *Health Policy in Britain*, Macmillan, p. 61. The subsequent discussion of structural change draws heavily on this source, which provides a detailed account of the development and management of the NHS.

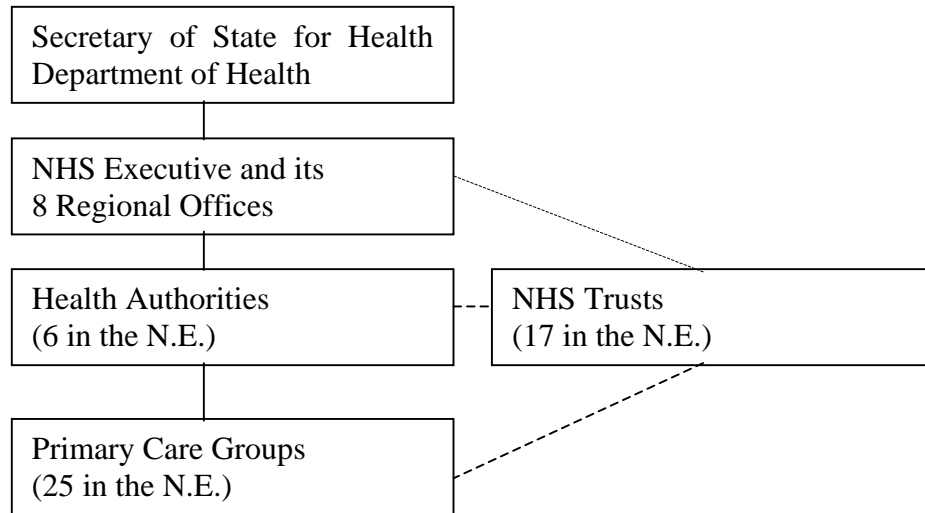
<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of the impact of the Conservative government's reforms, see J. LeGrand, N. Mays and J. Mulligan (eds.), *Learning from the NHS Internal Market*, King's Fund, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Health Action Zones target deprived areas with poor health status and significant pressures on services. They aim to address the health needs of

the area; increase the effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness of services; and to develop community partnerships for improving people's mental and physical health' (quoted from *HAZ website*, [www.haznet.org.uk](http://www.haznet.org.uk)). There are three

Health Action Zones in the North East: Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Teesside. The website gives information about their structure and programmes.

Fig. 7.1 STRUCTURE OF THE NHS IN ENGLAND



The NHS is big and complex. Policy-making and implementation are spread throughout the organisation; there is interdependence between the various tiers of the hierarchy and a substantial measure of clinical independence enjoyed by medical staff. Strategic decisions about national priorities are made at the centre, in Westminster and Whitehall. But many of the decisions which affect the delivery of health care and which have real and identifiable impacts on patients are made at the local level. Key decisions about, for example, the downgrading or closure of smaller hospitals, are primarily determined at local level. And most of the responsibility rests with NHS quangos run by unelected Boards, their membership unknown to most patients and, probably, to most NHS employees.

**Who runs the NHS in the North East?**

*The Department of Health.*

Alan Milburn, the MP for Darlington, is the current Secretary of State for Health. He leads the Department of Health and is a

member of the Cabinet. There are also two Health Ministers (John Denham, MP and John Hutton, MP) and three Parliamentary Under Secretaries (Lord Hunt of King's Heath; Gisela Stuart, MP and Yvette Cooper, MP). The Secretary of State and other Ministers are appointed by the Prime Minister and are formally accountable to Parliament.

*The NHS Executive.*

There are eight regional offices of the NHS Executive in England which oversee and monitor the performance of Health Authorities and Trusts. They also have responsibility for setting up Community Health Councils. Each of the regional offices has one, part-time, non-executive appointee, a Regional Chair appointed by the Secretary of State. The rest of the regional office comprises civil servants, led by a Regional Director.

The Northern and Yorkshire regional office has responsibility for the North East and its headquarters are in Durham. The Regional Chair is Zahida Manzoor, who was previously Chair of Bradford Health

Authority and was Deputy Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (see Annex 7.1). Her main role is to manage the process of non-executive appointments to Health Authorities and Trusts; all nominations to these posts are made by the Regional Chair, who then submits a choice of candidates to the Secretary of State for his decision.

#### *Health Authorities.*

There are six Health Authorities in the North East. Each Health Authority has a Board, comprising a Chair and up to six other non-executive members (all appointed by the Secretary of State) and five executive directors (senior staff of the Authority, including the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Public Health and two other officers). Non-executives are in the majority on the Boards of Health Authorities. The non-executives, especially the Chair, can have a considerable influence on the operation of the Authority and, consequently, on the provision and delivery of local health services.

There are currently 35 non-executive members (including Chairs) on the region's six Health Authorities (see Annex 7.2). At the time of our survey, in 1999, there were 33 non-executive members, consisting of 13 men and 20 women – a female majority which reflects well on the NHS and is certainly very different from many other quangos. It also represents a major change in recent years. In 1994, there were only 13 women out of altogether 40 non-executives on the region's Health Authorities – 32% compared with 61%. Recent appointments have, however, reversed this trend, with women once again in the minority, at 43%. In view of the work of the NHS it is surprising that, according to the Health Authorities, none of the 33 non-executives in 1999 were disabled. Only two of the 33 were from ethnic minority groups. 24 – nearly three-quarters – were aged 45-65, with four under 45 and five aged over 65.

Since 1996, the Department of Health has monitored the political activity of appointees in order to conform to guidelines set by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and be able to respond to possible charges of political bias. Candidates for appointment and existing Board members are requested to

declare 'significant political activity' over the past five years. Five members of North East Health Authorities declared political activity at the last audit in 1999; all five declared involvement with the Labour Party, including two local councillors.<sup>1</sup>

#### *NHS Trusts.*

In the North East there are currently 17 NHS Trusts providing health services under contracts agreed with Health Authorities and the new Primary Care Groups. Some of these Trusts were established in 1994, while others are much more recent, having been formed through mergers and reorganisations. For example, the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust was set up as recently as April 1999, following the merger of the Hartlepool and East Durham Trust and the North Tees Health Trust. Mergers and restructuring have reduced the number of Trusts in the North East from 27 in 1994 to 17 now – yet another source of structural change and upheaval in the NHS.

Like the Health Authorities, the Trusts are run by Boards made up of a Chair and five non-executive directors and up to five executive directors. The non-executives, including the Chair, are in the majority and have responsibility for appointing the executive directors. 14 of the 17 Trusts responded to our survey in 1999 (see Annex 7.3) and had altogether 81 non-executive directors, of which 41 were men and 40 were women, a gender balance very close to that of the population as a whole. In 1994, 42% were women, compared with 50% in 1999 and 44% in April 2000. Only two of the 81 non-executives in 1999 were from ethnic minority groups and only two were disabled people (but three of the Trusts declined to answer this question). The age range was similar to the Health Authorities, with three-quarters aged 45-65.

In April 1999, the 17 Trusts in the North East had altogether 98 non-executive members and 44 had declared 'significant political activity'. Of the 44, 38 declared involvement with the Labour Party, four with the Conservatives, there was one Liberal Democrat and one Independent. Virtually all the Trusts had at least one

councillor on their Board and some had as many as three - often senior councillors, such as Leaders and Deputy Leaders.

#### *Primary Care Groups*

In April 1999, the Health Authorities established 25 Primary Care Groups covering the North East, each having responsibility for budgets of £35-50 million a year. At present, the PCGs are committees of the Health Authorities but are now able to apply to become freestanding Trusts. Each PCG Board normally comprises: between four and seven GPs; one or two community or practice nurses; an officer nominated by the Local Authority Social Services Department; a lay member; one of the Health Authority's non-executive members; and the Chief Executive of the PCG. The GPs on the Board decide whether a GP is to be the Chair – as is almost always the case – and, if that is agreed, the GPs decide which of them is to serve as Chair. GPs cannot be a member of more than one PCG, but the Health Authority's non-executive nominee may serve on more than one PCG. Additional members may be co-opted to the Board, but do not have voting rights. The structure of PCGs is such that power is very largely in the hands of GPs, with limited representation of other health interests and token community representation. However, when PCGs become Trusts, it is expected that their Boards will have a majority of lay members.

Fifteen of the 25 PCGs in the North East responded to our survey in 1999 (see Annex 7.4). 113 (59%) of the 192 full members of these PCGs were men – probably mainly a reflection of the gender mix of GPs. Eleven (6%) were from ethnic minorities. None of the full members was disabled. 74 were aged under 45, 75 were aged 45-65 and three were over 65; this is a much younger age profile than for Health Authorities and Trusts. All but two of the PCGs responding to the survey had co-opted additional (non-voting) members, bringing in an average of four additional members; with the inclusion of co-optees, the gender balance was 54% men, 46% women, but with little change to the overall age structure or ethnic composition and, still, no disabled people.

#### **Community Health Councils**

The CHCs, established in 1974, do not 'run' the NHS but represent the interests of the public in relation to planning and providing services and can also act as advocates for individual service users. They are independent of the Health Authorities, Trusts and GPs. There are 12 CHCs in the North East and they each have between 18 and 30 voluntary members. Half the members are nominated by local authorities, a third by voluntary organisations such as a local Council for Voluntary Service, and the rest are appointed by the Secretary of State, selected from candidates who nominate themselves. Appointments are normally for a four year term and members are not paid for serving on CHCs but may claim expenses.

#### **Selection of Board members**

##### **Regional Chairs**

Regional Chairs are appointed by the Secretary of State. Nowadays, these positions are advertised in the press and applicants receive an information pack and application form. Appointment is for a period of up to four years.

##### **Health Authorities and Trusts**

The Chair and non-executive members of Health Authorities and Trusts are appointed by the Secretary of State, but the NHS Executive's Regional Office plays a major role in the appointment process. Since July 1996, appointments have been governed by guidelines laid down by the Commissioner for Public Appointments to ensure that appointments are made on merit, after an open and transparent recruitment and selection process involving independent assessors. The Department of Health has set out national goals and objectives for increasing the representation of women, members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities on the boards of NHS bodies. Goals to be achieved by December 2002 are: at least 50% of all NHS appointments to be women; 41% of Chairs to be women; and at least 7% of all appointees to come from an ethnic minority background.<sup>2</sup> The Department is also keen to appoint service users and carers.

Applications for these positions are invited through an annual advertisement in the press (although individuals may apply at any time) and applicants are now sent an information pack<sup>3</sup> and application form. The Secretary of State also invites local authorities and MPs to suggest suitable candidates from their areas, who then also need to complete an application form. Applications are initially sifted by an independent selection panel (consisting of a Chair of a Health Authority or Trust and an independent assessor from outside the NHS) and those considered to have suitable personal qualities and skills are interviewed by a panel consisting of a Health Authority Chair, the Chair of an NHS Trust, an independent assessor and an observer from the Regional Office. Each candidate is considered in relation to criteria specified in central guidance from the NHS Executive. If judged to be suitable for appointment, the applicant's name will then be added to a regional register of approved candidates (which is open for public inspection at the Regional Office). The level of interest in these appointments is such that there are now about 1000 names on the Northern and Yorkshire region register, and since relatively few vacancies arise, there are worries that expectations are being raised which will not, indeed cannot, be satisfied. On the other hand, there are difficulties in attracting suitably experienced candidates to be appointed as Chairs and also too few candidates coming forward from some localities – a problem, since appointees have to live in the area covered by the Health Authority or Trust to which they are appointed.

When a vacancy arises, the Regional Chair will select names from the register and discuss the necessary skill, gender and geographical mix needed for the particular Board with its Chair. The Regional Chairs will then submit two or three recommended candidates for the position to the Secretary of State to inform his decision. The Regional Office will liaise with the Chair of the Trust or Health Authority with the vacancy to consider their requirements and recommended candidates may have an informal discussion with the Chair. In the case of appointment to the position of Chair

of a Health Authority or Trust, local MPs will be asked for their views on the recommended candidates. If he is unhappy with the nominations, the Secretary of State may ask the Regional Chair to offer more candidates, again selected from the register. The final choice rests with the Secretary of State.

The information pack for applicants, first introduced in 1995, sets out the qualities, skills and experience needed to be appointed to a Health Authority or NHS Trust. 'Essential' attributes, as set out in the 1999 edition of the information pack, are as follows:

The applicant *must*:

- live in the area served by the Trust or Health Authority;
- have a strong personal commitment to the NHS;
- be able to demonstrate a commitment to the needs of the local community
- be a good communicator with plenty of common sense;
- be committed to the public service values of accountability, probity, openness and equality of opportunity;
- be able to demonstrate an ability to contribute to the work of the Board
- be available for about 3 days per month (non-executives) or about 3 days a week (Chairs);
- be able to demonstrate an interest in healthcare issues;

And, additionally, in the case of Chairs:

- be able to demonstrate leadership and motivation skills and the ability to think strategically; and
- have the ability to understand complex issues.

In relation to 'desirable' attributes, the applicant *might*:

- have experience as a carer or user of the NHS;
- have experience serving in the voluntary sector, particularly in an organisation working in health issues;

- have already served the local community in local government or some other capacity;
- be able to offer specialist skills or knowledge relevant to the Trust or Health authority;
- have an understanding and/or experience of management in the public, private or voluntary sectors; in the case of Chairs, have management experience at a senior level.

Seeking applications through advertising is a relatively recent innovation and is part of an effort to broaden the range of applicants and, consequently, appointees. In an attempt to be more aware of possible bias, applicants are asked to give details of any political activity and specify ethnic origin and disability. Nowadays, political activity is noted in press releases about new appointments. In the past, such affiliations were largely guessed at – and had led to accusations by Labour politicians that the Conservative government was packing NHS quangos with members of their party.

Chairs and non-executives are appointed for a period usually of two or four years and their appointment may be renewed at the end of that period of office, subject to assessment of their performance and agreement by the Secretary of State. Appointment beyond two terms (eight years) is not normally sanctioned. In practice, few organisations in the NHS have survived unchanged for more than a few years, so the issue of maximum terms may not often arise. It is the case that some who served on a Health Authority or Trust which has then been abolished or merged will subsequently be appointed to a new body. This is not uncommon.

It is worth stressing that the present system of appointments is much more centralised than it was in the past, notwithstanding the involvement of the NHS Executive's Regional Offices. All appointments are now made by the Secretary of State. Prior to the Conservative reforms of 1991, appointments were made by a combination of interests, including the Secretary of State, Local Authorities, those working in the NHS and the Regional and Area Health Authorities.

The present system is certainly streamlined and controlled and much more formalised; it may well be more effective, bringing in people who are committed and have much to offer.

But all patronage can be abused and invites controversy. There have been allegations of 'cronyism' in relation to recent appointments in the North East. Two appointments in particular sparked controversy: Paul Trippett, steward at Trimdon Club, who was appointed Chair to South Durham Health Care NHS Trust, and Councillor Kevin Earley, now Chair of North Durham Health Care NHS Trust. It was reported that both candidates – well connected with top Labour politicians – were 'parachuted' into these positions at a late stage in the appointment process.<sup>4</sup>

The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Dame Rennie Fritchie, has recently completed an investigation into claims that the Labour government has 'politicised' the appointments process by appointing a disproportionate number of active Party members. In a hard-hitting report<sup>5</sup>, she has criticised the way in which MPs and local authorities have been involved in 'nominating' people to these posts. In particular, this has resulted in an influx of Labour councillors. Between May 1997 and November 1999, 343 councillors were appointed to Health Authorities and Trusts – 84% of them were from the Labour Party. The former Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, has defended the appointments he made, saying that his main concern was to ensure that Boards were more representative of the local population and, consequently, he sought nominations from MPs and local authorities.<sup>6</sup> The Commissioner, however, is concerned about whether appointments were made on merit. The present Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, has agreed to a fundamental review of the appointments system in response to these criticisms.

The Commissioner's report does suggest that party political patronage in the NHS, rife under the Conservatives, has continued under Labour. In addition, it shows how

difficult it can be to develop a 'fair' appointments system – and thus highlights problems which are inherent in governance by quango. However, it also demonstrates the value of establishing monitoring procedures and having guidelines, and the usefulness of a regulatory body, such as the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, to scrutinise the appointments process. Appointments to many other local public bodies are not monitored in such a way and not subject to scrutiny.

### **Primary Care Groups**

Board members of PCGs are normally appointed for no more than three years. GPs willing to sit on PCG Boards need to be nominated by GPs from two other local practices and nominations are then considered by a joint panel of the Health Authority and Local Medical Committee. They may then go forward for election by single transferable vote, with every GP principal in the PCG area entitled to vote. Nurses have to be nominated by four nurses from other professional groups; they are then interviewed to determine their suitability as Board members and election is by a ballot of all members of the community/practice nursing workforce in the area. Two of the members are selected by other organisations: the Health Authority nominates one of their non-executives and the Local Authority Social Services Department nominates one of their officers. The lay member's role is an interesting one; that member is there to represent the interests of the community and the position is open to members of the public living in the area served by the PCG. Being a councillor or member of a Community Health Council does not disqualify for this appointment.

Most of the 15 PCGs in the North East responding to our survey have appointed Board members for a period of two or three years; members can be re-appointed after that and only one PCG set a maximum term (of three years). Almost all had placed advertisements in the local press to attract people to apply for the lay member position and this had been followed up by interview. One PCG, Newcastle East, had set up a

panel of community representatives to interview and select the lay member – who would, in future, be elected from the Community Group established with support from the PCG.

Some PCGs will become Trusts in the future: five of the 15 PCGs responding to our survey expected to become Trusts after 2000/01, while the rest had no plans at present. When they become Trusts, the composition of their Boards will radically change as they become like other NHS Trusts, with a Chair and five lay (non executive) members appointed by the Secretary of State and five executive (staff) members.

### **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration**

#### **The Regional Chair**

The Regional Chair of the NHS Executive advises the Secretary of State for Health on the development of national policy for the NHS. The Chair also advises the Secretary of State on the appointment and performance of NHS Trust and Health Authority Chairs and non-executive directors in the Region, acts as their 'mentor' and provides a channel for communication between them and the Secretary of State. Regional Chairs are expected to liaise with Ministers, MPs, Local Authorities and key regional institutions.

Regional Chairs are expected to work three days a week and they receive an 'honorary' of £21,250 a year, plus expenses.

#### *Health Authorities and Trusts*

The Chairs and other non-executive members of Health Authorities and Trusts have substantial responsibilities in relation to setting strategy, implementing decisions, monitoring service delivery and ensuring financial viability. The Chairs have a particularly important role as *leaders* of Health Authorities and Trusts; in conjunction with their Chief Executives, they are expected to ensure the effective working of the Board and that the organisation meets a wide range of legal and contractual obligations. Formally, the buck



stops at the Chair as the leader responsible to the Regional Director and the Secretary of State. Other non-executives have a less demanding role, but nonetheless an important one. They are part of the collective decision-making process and will also be involved in serving on sub-committees – including Primary Care Groups – and in the appointment of executive staff.

Both the Chairs and other non-executives are expected to work closely with other agencies (in health, local government and the voluntary sector) to plan and deliver services. There is now a major emphasis on collaboration with others and on the partnership approach. And non-executives are there to represent the local community or, at least, provide a way of liaising with the community and a means of articulating local concerns.

Since the Conservative government's reforms of 1991, Chairs and other non-executives have been paid for their services. This was considered important in securing good candidates for these positions (including people of working age) and is also associated with the idea of making the NHS more 'business-like'. Before the reforms, the non-executive members of NHS bodies had been unpaid.

The payment made to Chairs depends on the size of the Health Authority or Trust. Remuneration of Chairs ranges from £15,550 to £19,825 a year. Other non-executive members of Health Authorities and Trusts receive £5,140 a year. Remuneration is taxable and subject to National Insurance contributions. Members can claim their travelling expenses and other allowances to reimburse expenses necessarily incurred while on NHS business.

The time commitment expected from Chairs is considerable: 3 to 3½ days a week. This indicates the importance of their position, further underlined by the remuneration they receive. The non-executives are expected to spend about 3 days a month working for their Health Authority or Trust.

## Primary Care Groups

Board members of Primary Care Groups are paid 'allowances', which are related to the size of population of the area covered and the degree of financial responsibility which the PCG has been accorded.<sup>7</sup> Chairs of advisory ('Level 1') PCGs receive between £11,445 and £13,225 a year, while Chairs of PCGs holding delegated budgets ('Level 2') get between £13,225 and £15,125. Allowances for the other Board members are £2,700 a year for Level 1, £4,000 for Level 2. Expenses can also be claimed. The Health Authority non-executives on PCGs do not receive any additional payment over and above their Health Authority remuneration. Co-opted (non-voting) members may receive an allowance if they are required to attend Board meetings on a regular basis. The employer of a PCG Board member – a GP practice for instance – can claim compensatory or locum payment, up to a maximum of £6,000 for a PCG Chair who is a full-time GP. Board members may take on other work for the PCG as consultants and be paid for that work.

PCG Chairs are expected to devote between 1 and 2 days a week, while other Board members are expected to spend 2 to 2½ days per month on PCG business. The time commitment is, therefore, less than that for Health Authorities and Trusts and this is reflected in the relative level of remuneration.

When PCGs become Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) both the Board structure and remuneration will change. The Secretary of State will appoint the Chair and five non-executive directors to a PCT Board, and the Chair will receive £10,071 a year while non-executives will receive £5,140 (the same as non-executives on Health Authorities and existing Trusts).

## Accountability and openness

Accountability in the NHS is certainly a complex matter, made up of a network of accountabilities to Ministers and Parliament; to other tiers within the NHS structure; to some extent to Community Health Councils; and there is also accountability to the public

and to patients. It can be difficult to establish where decisions have been taken and where power really lies. Furthermore, there is the added dimension of professional interests and judgements – an aspect which contributes to the complications and the time taken to determine culpability in cases of litigation.

The Secretary of State is accountable to Parliament and the vast bureaucracy over which he presides is formally accountable to him. MPs can raise issues through parliamentary questions, through the Public Accounts Committee and the Commons Health Committee. NHS bodies, including Health Authorities and Trusts, can be subject to inquiries by the Audit Commission and National Audit Office and cases may be investigated by the Health Service Ombudsman. But complaints from patients and the public can take years to resolve; it can be frustrating and difficult to obtain information, and litigation can be very expensive.

What about local accountability? The Boards of Health Authorities and Trusts are accountable to the Secretary of State (and the NHS Executive Regional Office). They are expected to listen to local community concerns and respond – and this responsibility has been strengthened in recent years. But they are not accountable to the local community in the way that, for example, Local Authorities are accountable to the electorate.

Openness is an important component of accountability. The NHS is not noted for its openness, but access to information is improving. This is evident in many ways, for example: the patient's right of access to their medical records; publication of comparative data on outcomes of surgery; and some opening up of Health Authorities and Trusts – including access to meetings and improved availability of information.

#### *Health Authorities.*

The public have the right to attend Health Authority Board meetings because they are subject to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960. The six Health

Authorities in the North East confirmed that papers for these meetings are circulated to local agencies and the media and are available to anyone on request (Table 7.2). Two of the six hold a specific AGM. In the new spirit of partnership, some Health Authorities now formally invite observers from the local NHS Trusts, the Local Authority, Community Health Council and Primary Care Groups to contribute to debate at Board meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on political declarations of Board members (and also on their date of birth, occupational group and period of appointment) is published in the *Department of Health Public Appointments Annual Report, 1999*. 'Significant political activity' (over the past five years) includes office holding in a political party, public speaking in support of a party, candidature or election to a local authority, the national or European parliament.

<sup>2</sup> In April 1999, 47.5% of appointees on NHS bodies in England were women, 36.7% of Chairs were women, and 10.6% were from ethnic minorities (*DoH Public Appointments Annual Report, 1999*, Annexes 2 and 3).

<sup>3</sup> *The Appointment of Chairs and Non-Executive Directors and Members of NHS Trusts and Health Authorities in 1999 – Information Pack for Applicants*, Department of Health, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> See D. Hencke: 'Blair link to cronyism inquiry', *The Guardian*, 16.7.99, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments (2000) *Public Appointments to NHS Trusts and Health Authorities*, Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Available on the OCPA website: [www.ocpa.gov.uk](http://www.ocpa.gov.uk) This report also provides considerable detail on the appointments process.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Dobson's response to the Commissioner's report, *The Guardian*, 28.3.2000, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Health Service Circular 1998/190: *Primary Care Groups Remuneration*. See also Health Service Circular 1998/230: *Governing Arrangements for Primary Care Groups*.

**Table 7.1 Profile of non-executive members of North East Health Authorities and NHS Trusts, 1999**

	Total	Male	Female	Ethnic minority	Disabled	<45	45-65	>65
Health Authorities (6)	33	13	20	2	0	4	24	5
NHS Trusts (14)	81	41	40	2	2	9	48	6
Primary Care Groups (15 out of 25)	192	113	79	11	0	74	75	3

Three of the Trusts did not reply to the survey and only 15 of the 25 PCGs responded . Some provided no information on disability or age. The PCG data excluded co-opted members.

Source: Survey of North East Health Authorities, NHS Trusts and Primary Care Groups, 1999

**Table 7.2: Openness of North East Health Authorities and NHS Trusts, 1999**

	Health Authorities	NHS Trusts	Primary Care Groups
Publish Annual Reports	✓	✓	Most
Publish Corporate Plans	✓	✓	Most
Hold Annual Public Meetings	2 out of 5	✓	x
Board meetings open to the public	✓	✓	✓
Board agendas/papers available to public	✓	✓	✓
Board minutes available to public	✓	✓	✓
Public register of Board members' interests	✓	✓	✓
Website	1 out of 5	5 out of 17	1 out of 15

Three of the Trusts did not respond to the survey. Only 13 of the 25 PCGs responded to the survey.

Source: Survey of North East Health Authorities, NHS Trusts and Primary Care Groups, 1999

Health Authorities have to produce an Annual Report which is circulated locally and is available, free, to anyone on request. County Durham Health Authority has produced their latest Annual Report in tabloid newspaper form and has distributed this to all households in the County.

#### *NHS Trusts.*

Until recently, there was no requirement on Trusts to allow the public to attend their Board meetings. All they had to do was hold an Annual Public Meeting. Consequently, most Trusts held their Board meetings behind closed doors; at the time of our previous study, in 1994, only three of the region's 27 Trusts had chosen to have Board meetings open to the public. This has now changed. In 1998, the government made NHS Trusts subject to the same legal requirements as Health Authorities and they were therefore instructed to hold their Board meetings in public. The NHS Executive's Circular<sup>1</sup> heralding this change advised Trusts that having open Board meetings must not be a 'cosmetic exercise'; it was about 'ending excessive secrecy in decision making in public bodies'. Guidance on publicising meetings and making them accessible, meaningful and useful to the public was given in the Circular – and stands as a valuable statement of good practice which others could emulate. In response to our survey, some Trusts pointed to the changes they were implementing which are suggested in this guidance. City Hospitals Sunderland Trust, for example, now have their members at Board meetings sitting in a horseshoe shape, facing the public; publicity about meetings has been improved; Board papers are being more widely circulated and it is planned to hold meetings at various locations and, possibly, in the evening.

NHS Trusts in the region confirmed that their Board meetings are now open to the public and that papers can be obtained at the meeting or on application to the Trust (Table 7.2). In response to our survey, only one Trust (South Tyneside Healthcare) noted that Board papers are available in local libraries. All the Trusts hold Annual Public Meetings which are generally widely advertised in the media and, in a few cases, by notices in

public buildings, GP surgeries, etc. But it appears to be difficult to attract the public to the Annual Meetings, with attendance ranging from just three to 33 members of the public.

All Trusts are obliged to produce an Annual Report and, for the most part, those produced by the North East Trusts appear to be comprehensive and informative. They are available on request and are free – with one exception; Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust charges £10 for a copy of their (165 page) Annual Report. Trusts also make available their Business Plan which, again, can be obtained on request.

#### **Primary Care Groups**

The Boards of PCGs are accountable to the Chief Executive of the Health Authority. PCG Board meetings are open to the public, and agendas and papers for meetings are available on request (Table 7.2). However, very few members of the public actually attend meetings; of those PCGs responding to our survey, several reported that no members of the public came to their last meeting and the highest number was just five. This is despite the fact that they are making efforts to publicise meetings through press advertisements, posters and other local media. It may be that the public are uninterested - but many people will be unaware of PCGs and their important role.

Thirteen of the 15 PCGs responding to our survey intend to produce publicly available Annual Reports and 11 expected to publish a corporate plan or Primary Care Investment Plan.

#### **Declaration of interests**

Board members of Health Authorities, Trusts and PCGs are obliged to disclose their interests and enter these in a register of interests. These registers are available for public inspection, on request, at the headquarter offices of these organisations. Some Health Authorities and Trusts publish Board members' interests in their Annual Reports – an example of good practice.

### **Informing the public.**

In addition to Board meetings and Annual Reports, the Health Authorities, Trusts and PCGs use a variety of methods to inform the public of their activities. These methods include:

- Press releases and responding to media enquiries
- Newsletters
- Talks to local agencies and organisations
- Meetings and liaison with Patients' Councils, Community Health Councils, GPs, Local Authorities, MPs
- Consultation exercises
- Presence at local events/shows
- Health Promotion Days
- Websites (one Health Authority, five Trusts, one PCG)

Judging by responses to our survey, practice is very uneven; some seem to make more of an effort to inform than others. The Health Authorities appear keen to inform the public, while some of the Trusts have little in the way of an information strategy. Some of the PCGs are still deciding what to do, while others have developed strategies, including community development work. One PCG (Newcastle East) is developing a website and it looks promising: information includes minutes of Board meetings as well as links to other information sites.

A similar unevenness in approach is evident in relation to obtaining feedback from the public about health services. Methods include:

- Surveys of patients/carers
- Meetings and liaison with Community Health Councils, user groups, special interest groups
- Open forum sessions/questions at Board meetings
- Focus groups, health forums, citizens' juries, people's panels, community assemblies
- Conferences
- Clinical audit
- Public consultation, e.g. on Health Improvement Programmes

The Health Authorities – which have to consult to establish local needs – have generally the most developed approaches to obtaining feedback, while some of the Trusts appear to have limited commitment.

An important way of gaining information about services is through monitoring complaints from the public. All the Health Authorities and Trusts have formal complaints procedures, which are prescribed centrally by the NHS.<sup>2</sup> This includes the designation of a specific officer to register complaints, procedures to track progress, and timescales within which a response needs to be given. Reports about complaints are submitted to the Boards. Interestingly, at least one Trust (South Durham Health Care) operates a system where the Community Health Council undertakes a 'Complainant Satisfaction Audit' of 30% of all complaints, randomly chosen, which provides a check on practice and a measure of outcomes. In the case of PCGs, some handle complaints directly, while in others the practice is for complaints to be dealt with centrally, by the Health Authority.

### **Conclusion**

Structural change in the NHS – relentlessly pursued – has primarily been concerned with attempting to raise efficiency, not increase accountability. It is questionable whether the NHS has become more efficient. What is clear, however, is that its structure has become more complex and more fragmented. Quangos have proliferated and accountability – never a strong feature of the NHS – has become more convoluted and confused.

In recent years, attempts have been made to develop better practice in appointments to the Boards of Health Authorities and Trusts, and to encourage more openness. The appointments process is now more transparent, with greater emphasis on merit. Targets have been set to ensure improvements in the representativeness of those Boards. Meetings of the Trusts have now to be open to the public and the emphasis on partnership working and community consultation is providing new

opportunities to make the NHS more accountable at the local level.

The NHS now has some of the best procedures for appointing people to its local quangos and has produced model guidance on the conduct of meetings to encourage the public to attend. However, there still appears to be party political patronage in the appointments process and public involvement in the NHS decision-making remains very limited. It is heartening, though, to see that there are now structures in place which can identify, and guard against, patronage. There are also signs that at least some organisations in the NHS are trying to find ways of engaging with the public and are beginning to recognise that they need to be accountable to local people.

Governance in the NHS is improving, but there is still much scope for reform. To most people, its structure is confusing, the way it works is mysterious, and decisions about local service changes often come as a surprise. What is needed is certainly not more structural reform, but a real commitment to openness and accountability throughout the NHS.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Service Circular 1998/207: *Opening up NHS Board Meetings to the Public*.

<sup>2</sup> NHS complaints procedures have been described as 'a mess', 'a shambles' and a 'long, protracted, expensive process that satisfies nobody' – by the former Secretary of State, Frank Dobson, speaking at the Commons Health Committee. A particular concern is the emphasis on professional self-regulation which, it is hoped, will be challenged by clinical governance. See A. May: 'Systemic Failure', *The Guardian* (Society), 27.9.99, p.8.

## **ANNEX 7.1: THE NHS EXECUTIVE: NORTHERN AND YORKSHIRE**

The NHS Executive has eight Regional Offices in England. Each has an appointed Regional Chair, a Regional Director and Executive Directors.

The Northern and Yorkshire Regional Office covers a large area of 6.3 million people, extending from the Scottish border in the north to Huddersfield in the south, and from Whitehaven in the west to Hull on the east coast.

Contact details and information about the Regional Chair:

### **NHS Executive Northern and Yorkshire**

John Snow House, Durham University  
Science Park,  
Durham DH1 3YG  
Tel: 0191 301 1300  
Website: [www.doh.gov.uk/nyro](http://www.doh.gov.uk/nyro)

#### **Zahida Manzoor CBE (Regional Chair)**

Formerly Chair, Bradford Health Authority, 1992-97; former Commissioner and Deputy Chair (1995-98), Commission for Racial Equality. Previously NE Programme Director, Common Purpose Educational Trust. Career has included nursing, midwifery, health visiting, health care administration, lecturing. Trustee, NSPCC. Former Trustee, West Yorkshire Police Trust. Governor, Sheffield Hallam University, 1990-93. Co-founder and MD of Intellisys Ltd, an IT and management consultancy.

## ANNEX 7.2: HEALTH AUTHORITIES IN THE NORTH EAST

Information is given about the Chairs and other non-executive members of the six Health Authorities in the North East. Sources include: our survey of NHS bodies; Annual Reports (principally the published declarations of interests); and press releases.

Each Health Authority also has five executive Board members, comprising the Chief Executive and other senior salaried officers.

Health Authority budgets include expenditure which is now within the remit of Primary Care Groups. PCGs are constituted as Health Authority committees.

### County Durham Health Authority

Appleton House, Lanchester Road,  
Durham DH1 5XZ  
Tel: 0191 333 3232  
Budget 1999/2000: £407m

Dr John Marshall (Chair). Former Director of Durham University Business School. Formerly at UK Atomic Energy Authority and ICI. Chair, Magneco-Metrel UK Ltd. Non-executive director, County Durham Development Co., North of England Ventures Ltd., Exwold Technology Ltd. Chair of Governors, Roseberry Comprehensive School, Pelton. Trustee, HAW Cocks Memorial Homes. Lives in Middleton St George.

Josephine Turnbull. Local magistrate, Teesdale and Wear Valley. Part-time solicitor. Lives in Barnard Castle.

Dr Brian Docherty (Vice Chair). Partner in General Practice in Durham City.

Anne Beeton. Qualified nurse and has lectured in Applied Psychology in Healthcare at Teesside University.

Denyse Metcalfe. Divisional Director, Capita Business Services.

Rita Taylor. Family and Children's Inspector for Darlington Borough Council Social Services. Labour councillor; recently Mayor and Chair of Sedgfield Town Council.

### Gateshead and South Tyneside Health Authority

Ingham House, Horsley Hill Road, South Shields NE33 3BN  
Tel: 0191 401 4500

Budget 1999/2000: £256m

Bill Darling CBE (Chair). Proprietor pharmacist. Chair and MD, JM and W Darling Ltd, Galen Pharmacy Ltd. Past President, Pharmaceutical Society of G.B. (1971-3) and Pharmaceutical Group of the EEC (1985-6). Chair, University of Sunderland. Former Chair, National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts.

Bill Dodds (Vice Chair). Solicitor, practising in South Shields.

Gladys Hobson. Formerly Commercial Manager, St Clare's Hospice.

Ash Aggarwal. Owner, Aschem Chemist.

(Two vacancies)

### Newcastle and North Tyneside Health Authority

Benfield Road, Walkergate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 4PF  
Tel: 0191 219 6000  
Budget 1999/2000: £350m

Peter Carr (Chair). Chair, Durham County Waste Management; Co Durham Development Co., Northern Screen Commission; Acorn Energy.

Shahin Riaz. Director of Finance, Newcastle College. Director, Partner Time Ltd.

Ian Winterton. GP.

Catherine Wood. Solicitor, Robert Muckle Solicitors, Newcastle. Director, Redstructure Ltd. Governor, Gateshead College.



Prof Peter Bayliss (University Member).  
Dean of Medicine, Newcastle  
University Medical School.

Prof Jean Potts. Head of School of Health  
and Professional Practice, University of  
Northumbria.

Richard Baker. Age Concern, Newcastle.

**Northumberland Health Authority**

East Cottingwood, Morpeth,  
Northumberland NE61 2PD  
Tel: 01670 394400  
Budget 1999/2000: £200m

Dr Michael O'Brien (Chair). Retired  
Director of Public Health. Member of  
the Council of Newcastle University.

Richard Houlden OBE (Vice Chair).  
Headteacher, Hirst High School,  
Ashington. Chair, Wansbeck  
Community Regeneration Committee.

Mr D Byers. Retired tax inspector.

Mr C. E. H. Atkinson

Sally Thomas. Management Consultant  
with Social Regeneration Consultants.  
Previously social development officer,  
Tyne & Wear Development  
Corporation.

Mr D T Y Curry. Farmer.

**Sunderland Health Authority**

Durham Road, Sunderland SR3 4AF  
Tel: 0191 565 6256  
Budget 1999/2000: £200m

Joe L Mills OBE, DL (Chair). Former  
Regional Secretary, TGWU. Deputy  
Chair, Port of Tyne Authority. Deputy  
Chair of Governing Body, University  
of Northumbria. Director, International  
Centre for Life. Member, North East  
Regional Assembly. Formerly Board  
member, Tyne and Wear Development  
Corporation.

Jules Preston MBE. (Vice Chair)  
Managing Director, Sunderland City  
TEC. Governor, Cedars Special

School, Low Fell; Biddick School,  
Washington; Wearside and Monk-  
wearmouth Colleges of Further  
Education. JP, North Tyneside Bench.

Hilary Shaw. Architectural technician.

Louise Farthing. Income Tax Inspector.  
Sunderland City Councillor.

Carol Robertson. Journalist, Sunderland  
Echo.

Sohan Sing Heer. Probation officer.  
Former headteacher. Former Chair,  
Racial Equality Council.

**Tees Health Authority**

Poole House, Stokesley Road, Nunthorpe,  
Middlesbrough TS7 0NJ  
Tel: 01642 320000  
Budget 1999/2000: £369m

Tony Waites (Chair). Worked in the  
textiles industry for 30 years; non-  
executive director of Visage Holdings  
Ltd. Management consultant.  
Magistrate. Trustee of Teesside  
Hospice Care Foundation. Lives in  
Middleton St George.

Ann O'Hanlon. Previous experience in  
local government and a housing  
association. Lives in Kirkclevington.

Helen Pickering. Deputy Vice-  
Chancellor, Teesside University. Lives  
in Eaglescliffe. Board member,  
Northern Arts; Regional Technology  
Centre; HESIN; University of Teesside  
Enterprises; Safe in Teesside. Council  
member, Cleveland Common Purpose.  
Former Chair, BBC Radio Cleveland  
Advisory Council. Trustee, Dorman  
Museum; Cecil Yuill Foundation.

Fran Hutchison. Schoolteacher.

Russell Hart. Councillor and former  
Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council.  
Accountant. Owner and manager of  
two nursing homes. Member,  
Cleveland Police Authority.

Dr Nigel Rowell. GP.

### ANNEX 7.3: NHS TRUSTS IN THE NORTH EAST

Information is given about the Chairs and other non-executive members of the 17 NHS Trusts in the North East. Sources include: our survey of NHS bodies; and Annual Reports (principally the published declarations of interests).

**Each NHS Trust also has up to five executive Board members, comprising the Chief Executive and other senior salaried officers.**

#### **City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Trust**

Kayll Road, Sunderland SR4 7TP

Tel: 0191 565 6256

Budget 1999/2000: £120m

(Includes Ryhope Hospital; Sunderland Eye Infirmary; Sunderland Royal Hospital. Trust established 1994).

David Graham (Chair). Former MD, Sunderland and South Shields Water Company. Accountant. Chair, Age Concern Sunderland. Magistrate; school governor; former director of Wearside TEC; Tax Commissioner; member of OFWAT Northumbria Customer Services Committee. Lives in Sunderland.

Ailsa Martin. Project Co-ordinator of the Princess Royal Trust Sunderland Careers Centre. Director, Artists Agency. Committee member, Sunderland Arts Studio. Director, ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd.

Margaret Forbes. Councillor, Sunderland City Council. Former Executive Secretary with Tyne Tees T.V. Member, Tyne and Wear Fire and Civil Defence Authority. Director, Tyne and Wear Economic Development Co. Governor, St Anthony's RC School and Southmoor Comprehensive School.

Bryan Charlton. Former training officer, Interchange North Ltd. Local councillor and chair, Sunderland Social Services Committee. Member of Age Concern and Southwick Neighbourhood Youth Project. Governor, Hylton Redhouse Comprehensive School.

Grahame Morris. Researcher and Constituency Agent for John Cummings MP. Labour Councillor, Easington District Council. Formerly Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer, Sunderland Hospitals.

Professor Jeff Brown. Deputy Vice Chancellor, Sunderland University. Pharmacist. Director, Regional Technology Centre; Entrust.

#### **County Durham and Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust**

Lanchester Road, Durham DH1 5RD

Tel: 0191 333 6262

Budget 1999/2000: £45m

(Includes Chester-le-Street Hospital; County Hospital, Durham; Derwent Clinic, Shotley Bridge; Earls House Hospital, Durham; Highfield Day Hospital, Chester-le-Street; Josephine Rutter Centre, Sedgefield; Pierremont Unit, Darlington; The Gables, Sedgefield. Trust established 1998. Provides services for people throughout County Durham with mental health problems or learning disabilities.)

Angela Ballatti (Chair). Senior Tutor at Durham University Business School. Former town planner; subsequently public relations officer at Komatsu UK and human resource consultant with Coopers & Lybrand and CPCr Ltd. Lives in Durham City.

Patricia Conway. Labour councillor, Durham City Council. Lives in

Gilesgate, Durham. Retired school teacher.  
Dr Candasamy Rajendran. Honorary Senior Research Associate, Department of Applied Ecology and Limnology, Newcastle University. Lives in Durham City.

Gloria Willis. Labour Councillor, Sedgefield Borough Council. Director of Princess Royal Trust for Carers for Sedgefield Locality. Lives in Sedgefield.

Jennifer Robson OBE. Retired school teacher. Formerly Chair, now President, of Northumbria Tourist Board. Lives in Medomsley.

Professor Robert Sullivan, Professor in Law Department, University of Durham. Vice Chair, Aycliffe Centre for Young People. Lives in Durham City.

#### **Gateshead Health NHS Trust**

Whinney House, Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 5AR  
Tel: 0191 482 0000  
Budget 1999/2000: £84m  
(Includes Bensham Hospital; Craggside Court; Dryden Road Day Hospital; Dunston Hill Hospital; Queen Elizabeth Hospital; Tranwell Unit. Trust established 1998, from the merger of Gateshead Healthcare Trust and Gateshead Hospitals Trust.)

Peter Smith (Chair). Retired County Treasurer for Tyne & Wear County Council. Executive Director, Westgate Trust. Chair, Northern Clinical Waste Consortium. Lives in Beamish.

Malcolm Graham. Labour councillor, Gateshead Council. Lives in Low Fell. Chair, Gateshead Victim Support. Chair of Governors, Felldyke Primary School.

Minnie Robson. Labour councillor, Gateshead Council. Lives in Kibblesworth.

David Irwin. Chief Executive, Project North East (enterprise agency). Director, Design Works (Gateshead) Ltd; Newcastle Youth Enterprise Centre; Northern Enterprise Group Ltd.

Ann Cooper. Former Director, MARI Group Ltd. Board member, Newcastle Age Concern.

Jacque Parkin. Pharmacist; Director of Dixon & Spearman pharmacies.

#### **Newcastle City Health NHS Trust**

Milvain Building, Newcastle General Hospital, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6BE  
TEL: 0191 273 6666  
Budget 1999/2000: £90m  
(Includes Fleming Nuffield Unit; Hunters Moor Regional Rehabilitation Centre; Newcastle General Hospital; Sanderson Hospital; St Nicholas Hospital. Trust established 1994.)

Sue Pearson (Chair). Chief Executive, Age Concern Newcastle. Member, Northumbria Police Authority. Former Labour councillor, Newcastle City Council.

Prof Janet Walker (Vice Chair). Professor of Social Policy, and Director of Newcastle Centre for Family Studies, Newcastle University.

Dr Roger Vaughan. Head of Dept of Management Studies, Newcastle University. Director, Tyneside Stables Project Ltd; Tyne & Wear Enterprise Trust Ltd; Northern Sinfonia Concert Society.

Roger Spoor. Chair, Calvert Trust. Director, Northern Football Ground Co. Ltd; Burn Fireclay Co. Ltd; St Cuthbert Newcastle Estates Ltd. Vice President, Disability North.

Gina Tiller. Labour Councillor and Chair of Social Services, Newcastle City

Council. Director, Newcastle Healthy City Project.

**Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust**

Freeman Hospital, High Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7DN  
Tel: 0191 284 3111  
(Includes Dental Hospital; Freeman Hospital; Newcastle General Hospital (Acute Services); Northern Centre for Cancer Treatment; Royal Victoria Infirmary; Walkergate Hospital. The Trust was created in 1998, from the merger of the Freeman Group of Hospitals NHS Trust and Royal Victoria Infirmary and Associated Hospitals NHS Trust.)

Sir Miles Irving (Chair). Professor of Surgery at University of Manchester and holds part-time post as Director of the NHS Health Technology Assessment Programme. Honorary Visiting Professor at Newcastle University. Member, Board of Governors, University of Northumbria. Lives in Corbridge, Northumberland.

Margaret Riley. Teacher. Lives in Jesmond, Newcastle.

David Wood. Graphic digital artist and Labour councillor, Newcastle City Council. Lives in Walkerdene, Newcastle.

Prof David Neal. Professor of Surgery, Newcastle University. Member of Management Group, King's Fund, London.

Mrs H A Parker

Mr R Middleton

**North Durham Health Care NHS Trust**

Dryburn Hospital, North Road, Durham DH1 5TW  
TEL: 0191 333 2333  
Budget 1999/2000: £82.5m  
(Includes Chester-le-Street Hospital; Dryburn Hospital, Durham; Maiden Law Hospital; Shotley Bridge Day Hospital for the Elderly; Shotley Bridge General

Hospital; South Moor Hospital, Stanley. Trust established 1998.)

Kevin Earley (Chair). Former hospital radiographer. Recruitment consultant for Capstan Teachers, a teacher supply agency. Labour councillor, Derwentside District Council, since 1987; County Councillor, Durham County Council, 1989-97. Lives in Consett.

Charles Magee. Labour County Councillor and Chair of Durham County Social Services Committee. Lives in Ferryhill.

Alison Hiles. Labour Councillor, Derwentside District Council. Market research interviewer. Lives in Esh Winning.

Vera McEwan. Barrister. Lives in North Lodge, Chester-le-Street.

Doug Hollingworth. Former Chief Executive, Three Rivers Housing Association, Durham. Housing consultant. Lives in Durham.

Mike Wardle. Retired social worker, Newcastle City Council.

**North East Ambulance Service**

Ambulance Headquarters, Scotswood House, Amethyst Road, Newcastle Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7YL  
Tel: (0191) 273 1212  
Budget 1999/2000: £35.5m  
(Trust formed in 1999, by merger of Durham County Ambulance Service and Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trusts.)

Peter Innes (Chair). Former Chief Executive of Easington District Council, until retirement in 1998. Lives in Lanchester.

Jill Baker. Development Worker for Save the Children Fund at Cowgate, Newcastle. School governor at two Tyneside schools. Lives in North Shields.

Tom Conery. Retired trade union official.  
Lives in Chester-le-Street.

Liz Rawlins. Retired nurse. Magistrate.  
Lives in Gosforth, Newcastle.

Prof Mohammed Sarwar. Professor at  
Newcastle University. Lives in  
Newcastle.

(one vacancy)

**North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust**

Hartlepool General Hospital, Holdforth  
Road, Hartlepool TS24 9AH  
Tel: 01429 266654  
Budget 1999/2000: £133m  
(Includes Hartlepool General Hospital;  
North Tees General Hospital; Peterlee  
Community Hospital. Formed in 1999 by  
the merger of Hartlepool and East Durham  
Trust and North Tees Health Trust.)

Bryan Hanson OBE, DL (Chair). Former  
development engineer. Labour  
councillor, has served as Leader of  
Hartlepool Borough Council and  
Cleveland County Council. Former  
Chair, Cleveland College of Art and  
Design and former Board member  
of Teesside Development  
Corporation. Lives in Hartlepool.

Patricia Sole. Project Manager,  
Endeavour Housing Association,  
Hartlepool.

Kenneth Gardner MBE. Retired Director  
of Personnel, SCA Packaging Ltd,  
Hartlepool.

Ann Cains. Labour Councillor, Stockton  
Borough Council.

Madelaine Remington. Manager of JHP  
Training Agency, Hartlepool.  
Previously worked for RHM Foods  
and Fisher Price Toys.

(one vacancy)

**Northgate and Prudhoe NHS Trust**

Northgate Hospital, Morpeth,  
Northumberland NE61 3BP  
TEL: 01670 394000  
Budget 1999/2000: £71m  
(Includes Northgate Hospital; Prudhoe  
Hospital. Trust established 1994.)

Sue Whittaker (Chair). Journalist, who  
has worked for BBC TV and radio,  
and press. Formerly PR consultant;  
former Head of External Relations,  
Northern Arts. Lady Mayoress of  
Newcastle, 1988-89.

Jeremy J A Handley. Retired General  
Manager, Procter and Gamble.

Isabel A Smales. Former manager with  
the Milk Marketing Board.  
Business consultant and partner in  
family farming business.  
Accountant.

Toots Laviers. Retired nurse. Co-opted  
member of Northumberland County  
Council Social Services Committee.

Bernard Pidcock. Manager, Blyth Valley  
Citizens Advice Bureau. Former  
youth worker and priest; former  
manager at Barnardo's and Director  
of Meadow Well Community  
Development Trust. Councillor,  
Seaton Delaval ward. Chair of  
Governors, Seaton Delaval First  
School.

Elizabeth Derrington. Solicitor.

**Northumberland Mental Health NHS  
Trust**

St George's Hospital, Morpeth,  
Northumberland NE61 2NU  
TEL: 01670 512121  
(Manages St George's Hospital)

David Reay (Chair). Retired Chief  
Executive, Tyne Tees Television.  
Lives in Morpeth.

David Nicholson. County Councillor.  
Lives in Stakeford.

Frank Sharratt. Kerr McGee Oil UK plc.  
Former Board member, Tyne &  
Wear Development Corporation.

Prof Royston Stephens. University Dean,  
Faculty of Health, Social Work and  
Education, University of  
Northumbria. Lives in Hexham.

Anne Ward Platt. NHS lay assessor and  
former teacher. Lives in  
Stannington.

Gail Williams. Solicitor in Newcastle.  
Lives in Ingoe.

**Northumbria Health Care NHS Trust**

North Tyneside General Hospital, Rake  
Lane, North Shields NE29 8NH  
Tel: 0191 259 6660  
Budget 1999/2000: £155m  
(Includes Alnwick Infirmary; Ashington  
Hospital; Berwick Infirmary; Blyth  
Community Hospital; Coquetdale Cottage  
Hospital, Rothbury; Haltwhistle War  
Memorial Hospital; Hexham General  
Hospital; Morpeth Cottage Hospital; North  
Tyneside General Hospital, North Shields;  
Sir G B Hunter Memorial Hospital,  
Wallsend; Wansbeck General Hospital,  
Ashington. Trust formed 1998, from the  
merger of North Tyneside Health Care  
Trust, Northumberland Community Trust,  
Cheviot and Wansbeck Trust and Hexham  
General Hospital.)

Brian Flood (Chair). Labour leader of  
North Tyneside Council, 1976-96.  
Retired engineer. Former member  
of North Tyneside CHC. Lives in  
Killingworth.

Ian Swithenbank. Former Labour leader  
of Northumberland County Council.  
Lives in Cramlington.

Revd. Doreen Hood. Chaplain. Former  
Nurse. Welfare Officer for North  
Tyneside Multiple Sclerosis  
Society. Lives in Cullercoats.

Neil Munday. Finance Director, One  
NorthEast. Parish Councillor.

Ian McMinn. Retired. Former Labour  
councillor, Northumberland County  
Councillor.

Claire Harper. Solicitor.

**Priority Healthcare Wearside NHS  
Trust**

Wellfield Mews, Cherry Knowle Hospital,  
Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 ONB  
Tel: 0191 565 6256  
Website: www.phw.co.uk  
Budget 1999/2000: £40m  
(Includes Cherry Knowle Hospital,  
Ryhope; Monkwearmouth Hospital,  
Sunderland. Trust established 1994).

Cynthia Rickitt (Chair). Nurse, then  
qualified as a midwife in 1980 and  
worked at Ashington Hospital.  
Appointed Director of Midwifery at  
City Hospitals, Sunderland, in 1987.  
Lives in Durham.

Arnold Hood (Vice Chair). Former  
personnel manager with Tyne and  
Wear County Council and the  
National Coal Board. Involved in  
youth work and a methodist lay  
preacher.

David Wardill. Retired head teacher of a  
Gateshead comprehensive school.

Don Chroston. Retired Director of  
Finance, Sunderland Health  
Authority. Chair, Sunderland City  
College.

Brian Dodds. Local Labour councillor,  
Pallion ward, Sunderland City  
Council. Local magistrate.

**South Durham Health Care NHS Trust**

Darlington Memorial Hospital, Hollyhurst  
Road, Darlington DL3 6HX  
Tel: 01325 380100  
Budget 1999/2000: £95m  
(Includes Bishop Auckland General  
Hospital; Darlington Memorial Hospital;  
Homelands Hospital, Crook; Horn Hall  
Hospital, Stanhope; Richardson Hospital,  
Barnard Castle; Sedgfield Community

Hospital; Tindale Crescent Hospital, Bishop Auckland. Trust established April 1998.)

Paul Trippett (Chair). Manager of Trimdon Working Men's Club. Labour Councillor, Durham County Council, 1993-. Member of South West Durham CHC, 1992-95. Trustee, Trimdon 2000. Vice-Chair, Sedgfield Constituency Labour Party. Chair of Governors, Trimdon Village Infants' School. Lives in Trimdon Village.

Olive Brown. Councillor and leader (Labour) of Wear Valley District Council. Retired librarian. Lives in Crook, County Durham.

Elizabeth Pollard. Stress management consultant. Lives in Scorton, Richmond.

John Williams. Labour leader of Darlington Borough Council. Retired teacher. Deputy Chair, One NorthEast. Vice-Chair, Tees Valley Development Co. Lives in Darlington.

Jill Wilson. Marketing director for a local security company, Security Surveyors Ltd. Lives in Croft-on-Tees, Darlington.

Anthony Wolfe (Vice Chair). Retired teacher. Lives in Eggleston, Barnard Castle.

#### **South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trust**

Middlesbrough General Hospital, Ayresome Green Lane, Middlesbrough TS5 5AZ  
Tel: 01642 850850  
(Includes Guisborough Maternity Hospital; Middlesbrough General Hospital; North Riding Infirmary, Middlesbrough; South Cleveland Hospital, Middlesbrough, West Lane Hospital, Middlesbrough).

John R Foster OBE (Chair). Former Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Borough Council. Chair, Tees Valley

Business Links. Board member, Audit Commission; Housing Corporation; Tees Valley Development Co. Governor, University of Teesside. Trustee, Dorman Long Museum; Cleveland Community Foundation.

Sheila Argument. Labour Councillor, Redcar and Cleveland Council. Governor at two local schools.

Peter Fulton. Recently retired as head of a training company set up by ICI and British Steel.

John Mann. Previously Chief Officer in the Public Protection Dept., Middlesbrough Borough Council. Member, management committee of Unite Mediation Service. Member, regional Environment Advisory Group of the Environment Agency.

Dorothy Sigsworth. Former Chair, South Tees CHC.

Barbara Hawkins.

#### **South Tyneside Health Care NHS Trust**

Harton Wing, South Tyneside District Hospital, Harton Lane, South Shields NE34 0PL  
Tel: 0191 454 8888  
Budget 1999/2000: £68m  
(Includes Monkton Hall, Jarrow; Palmer Community Hospital, Jarrow; Primrose Hill Hospital, Jarrow; South Tyneside District Hospital, South Shields. Trust established 1993).

Peter Davidson (Chair). Non-executive director, Tyneside Economic Development Co. Ltd. Managing Executive, Sedgewick UK Risk Services Ltd, Newcastle.

Stephen Clark (Vice Chair). Director, Stephen Clark Consulting Ltd; IDS Ltd; NEL Ltd; Tyne & Wear Enterprise Trust Ltd.

Julie Parkinson. Communications Manager. Director, AHC Ltd.

John Temple. P.A. to David Clark MP, Councillor and Deputy Leader, South Tyneside Council. Director, Tyne & Wear Development Co. Ltd.

(one vacancy)

**Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust**

St Luke's Hospital, Marton Road, Middlesbrough TS4 3AF  
Tel: 01642 850850  
Budget 1999/2000: £70m  
(Includes Carter Bequest Hospital, Middlesbrough; East Cleveland Hospital, Brotton; Guisborough General Hospital; St Luke's Hospital, Middlesbrough; Stead Memorial Hospital, Redcar. Formed 1999 following dissolution of Hartlepool and East Durham, North Tees Health, and South Tees Community and Mental Health NHS Trusts.

Eileen Grace. Deputy Leader, Middlesbrough Council and Chair of the Social Services and Health Committee. Lives in Middlesbrough.

Dr Kate Gillen. Lecturer, Teesside University.

Eleanor Lister OBE. Labour councillor, Darlington Borough Council and Chair of Education Committee. Former Chair, Association of Community Health Councils. Lives in Darlington.

Maureen Amy Hamilton. Self-employed healthcare consultant. Lives in Redcar.

Dr Alan Brighthouse. Retired GP. Lives in Danby, North Yorkshire.

William Gamble. Retired Building Society manager. Lives in Saltburn.

**Tees, East and North Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust**

Fairfields, Shipton Road, York YO30 1XW; Tees Division: Venture House, St Luke's Hospital, Marton, Middlesbrough TS4 3TL

Tel: 01904 666000 (York); 01642 850888 (M'bro)

Budget 1999/2000: £28m

(Formed 1999 as a result of the merger of Cleveland, North Yorkshire and Humberside Ambulance Services).

John Nelson (Chair). Part-time consultant in transport and change management. Formerly a group managing director of British Rail. Director of Hull Trains. Lives in York.

Kenneth Hall. Formerly employed at Tees Docks. Councillor, Middlesbrough Borough Council. Former councillor, Cleveland County Council. Lives in Middlesbrough.

David Taylor (Vice-Chair). Retired general manager in the gas industry. Magistrate.

Linda Wright. Freelance consultant in health care. Formerly worked in health promotion with South Tees Health Authority, followed by lecturing at Durham University and work with a national charity. Lives in Middlesbrough.

Juliet Peck. Director of a UK consultancy working in India, Pakistan and Africa. Formerly worked in overseas aid and refugee projects and film producer and reporter. Lives in North Yorkshire.



## **ANNEX 7.4: PRIMARY CARE GROUPS IN THE NORTH EAST**

There are 25 Primary Care Groups (PCGs) in the North East, set up as committees of the Health Authorities. Most have around 13 Board members, including up to seven GPs.

There is one appointed Lay Member on the Board, who is there to represent the interests of the community. On account of their special role and their status as appointees, they are listed below together with the name of the Chair and contact information for the PCGs in the region. Lists of all the PCG Board members can be accessed via the NHS Executive Northern and Yorkshire website:

[www.doh.gov.uk/nyro/pcg/pages/pcginfo.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/nyro/pcg/pages/pcginfo.htm)

### **County Durham PCGs**

#### **Dales PCG**

1 George Street, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham DL14 7BE  
Tel: 01388 458835  
Chair: Dr S M Findlay  
Lay member: Mr F Wilson

#### **Darlington PCG**

Valley House, Valley Street, Darlington  
Tel: 01325 487773  
Chair: Dr R D James  
Lay member: Mrs L Elliot

#### **Derwentside PCG**

Shotley Bridge Hospital, Shotley Bridge, Co Durham  
Tel: 01207 214371  
Chair: Dr J F Levick  
Lay member: Mrs L Clark

#### **Durham and Chester-le-Street PCG**

Federation House, Green Lane, Durham  
Tel: 0191 333 3917  
Chair: Dr P R Walton  
Lay member: Lady A Calman

#### **Easington PCG**

Health Partnership Centre, Council Offices  
Easington, Co Durham SR4 3TN  
Tel: 0191 527 0501  
Chair: Dr R G Abbott  
Lay member: Mr C Patching

### **Sedgefield PCG**

Green Lane, Spennymoor, Co Durham  
DL16 6HD  
Tel: 01388 824006  
Chair: Dr Dinah Roy  
Lay member: Mr J Rogers

### **Gateshead and South Tyneside PCGs**

#### **Central and East Gateshead PCG**

12 Enterprise House, Kingsway,  
Team Valley, Gateshead NE11 OSR  
Tel: 0191 491 5713  
Chair: Dr H Groom  
Lay member: Revd B Howell

#### **South Tyneside PCG**

Primrose Hill Hospital,  
Primrose Terrace, Jarrow NE32 5HA  
Tel: 0191 451 6363  
Chair: Dr W Hall  
Lay member: Ann Bundock

#### **West Gateshead PCG**

Dunston Hill Hospital, Whickham  
Highway,  
Gateshead NE11 9QT  
Tel: 0191 403 6409  
Chair: Dr W Westwood  
Lay member: Mr G Henderson

**Newcastle and North Tyneside PCGs**

**Newcastle East PCG**

Pearl Assurance House, 7 New Bridge Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8BG  
Tel: 0191 219 4702

Website: [www.pcdc.org.uk/eastpcg](http://www.pcdc.org.uk/eastpcg)

Chair: Dr Trevor White

Lay member: vacant

**Newcastle North PCG**

Pearl Assurance House, 7 New Bridge Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8BG  
Tel: 0191 219 4702

Chair: Dr Julian Bromly

Lay member: vacant

**Newcastle West PCG**

Pearl Assurance House, 7 New Bridge Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8BG  
Tel: 0191 219 4702

Chair: Dr Debbie Freake

Lay members; Paul Nayyar, Sylvia Potts

**Riverside PCG**

Suite 8, Albion House, Sidney Street, North Shields NE29 ODW  
Tel: 0191 219 5914

Chair: Dr Liz Harrison

Lay member: Alan Geronio

**Whitley Bay PCG**

Suite 8, Albion House, Sidney Street, North Shields NE29 ODW  
Tel: 0191 219 5914

Chair: Dr George Rae

Lay member: Kenneth Stringer

**Northumberland PCGs**

**North Northumberland PCG**

The Bondgate Surgery, Infirmary Close, Alnwick NE66 2NL  
Tel: 01665 626724

Chair: Dr Mike Guy

Lay member: Helen Ruff

**Blyth Valley PCG**

Marine Terrace, Blyth NE24 2LN

Tel: 01670 782300

Chair: Dr Alan Dove

Lay member: Margaret Simpson

**Central PCG**

Nursery Park Primary Care, Nursery Park Road, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 OHP

Tel: 01670 394700

Chair: Dr Jane Lothian

Lay member: Anthony Bray

**The West PCG**

The Tower, Hexham General Hospital, Corbridge Road, Hexham NE46 1QJ

Tel: 01434 656200

Chair: Dr Derek Thomson

Lay member: David Fruin

**Sunderland PCGs**

**Sunderland North PCG**

Unit 30a, Business and Innovation Centre, Sunderland Enterprise Park, Wearfield, Sunderland SR5 2TA

Tel: 0191 516 6300

Chair: Dr R Ford

Lay member: Mr Dennis Cunningham

**Sunderland South PCG**

Springwell Health Centre, Springwell Road, Sunderland

Tel: 0191 522 8953

Chair: Dr W Wright

Lay member: Denise Wilson

**Sunderland West PCG**

Hetton Medical Centre, Francis Way, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-le-Spring DH5 9EZ

Tel: 0191 526 6351

Chair: Dr J Mackay

Lay member: Anne Walton

**Tees PCGs**

**Hartlepool PCG**

Mandale House, Harbour Walk,  
The Marina, Hartlepool TS24 OUX  
Tel: 01429 285079  
Chair: Dr Steve Andelic  
Lay member: Mrs Sarah E Gee

**Middlesbrough and Eston PCG**

The Village Medical Centre, 400-404  
Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough TS5 6HF  
Tel: 01642 352370  
Chair: Dr H Waters  
Lay member: Ms A Clarke

**Langbaugh PCG**

13 Park Avenue, Redcar TS10 3LA  
Tel: 01642 480935  
Chair: Dr John Docherty  
Lay member: Mr Tim Argument

**North Tees (Stockton) PCG**

Queens Park Medical Centre, 2 Farrer  
Street, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 2AW  
Tel: 01642 352297  
Chair: Dr J R Thornham  
Lay member: Mr A G Turner

## 8. EDUCATION

All educational institutions are run by some form of ‘governing body’, but the different sectors of the education system – schools, colleges and universities – each have different arrangements and structures. There are also some variations within each of the sectors – between the different types of school, for example, and between the old and new universities. While governing bodies formally have a central role and position in a school, college or university, some exercise little real power, while others are very much in charge of strategic direction and management. In addition, some of these bodies are far more visible than others. Most parents will be aware of the governing body of their child’s school and may well know some of its members. By contrast, few members of staff at a university will know who governs their institution and, therefore, who ultimately employs them. Virtually none of the students at a university will know who is on the governing body - and, in most cases, no attempt will be made to inform them.

Educational institutions have been subject to great change, even upheaval, for many years, affecting their structures, funding, management and their educational content. Given the political salience of education and its social and economic importance, successive governments have been concerned to demonstrate their commitment by introducing reforms and promising improvements in performance. In education, as in the NHS, change has become a permanent feature, resulting in instability and sometimes confusion. Change has affected everyone in the educational system, not least the governing bodies of institutions trying to respond to pressures which come from many different directions and sources.

### Schools<sup>1</sup>

State-funded primary and secondary schools each have their own governing bodies which have responsibility for managing the school, but their actions are controlled and constrained by central and local government.

In recent years, central government has become a stronger influence, while the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have seen a considerable reduction in their powers.

At national level, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) determines the level of funding for education, sets national standards and the curriculum, and negotiates the pay and conditions of staff. Over the last 20 years or so, the Department has become more interventionist, particularly through the establishment of a national curriculum, the development of nationally-applied tests and the use of targets and league tables. The Department has considerable powers to intervene if not satisfied with the performance of a school or LEA and can impose a short-term special management team or private sector contractors to take over a school perceived to be failing. Schools (and Sixth Form Colleges) are subject to an inspection regime run by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), which awards contracts to private organisations to undertake inspections. Under the leadership of Chris Woodhead, OFSTED has acquired a controversial reputation for aggressively pursuing the attainment of government targets and ‘naming and shaming’ those schools which are considered to be performing badly.

At the local level, the LEAs within local authorities (councils) have responsibility for managing the schools in their area, but that responsibility has been significantly diluted. The LEAs trace their history back to locally-elected School Boards, established in 1870, and they used to be responsible for all state education, apart from universities. In the 1980s, colleges and polytechnics were taken out of LEA control, essentially leaving the LEAs with responsibility only for schools. That role was further diminished by the introduction of Local Management of Schools, which gave more power and freedom to the governors and the head of individual schools. Schools were able and,

indeed, encouraged to go further and were offered extra finance to opt-out entirely of the LEA system.<sup>2</sup> In addition, LEAs lost some of their discretionary powers, which some had used, for example, to introduce comprehensive schools despite opposition from central government.

An LEA's role is now quite limited, but nevertheless remains important. It allocates school places across the LEA area; provides support services and special education services; undertakes strategic planning and management; and promotes the attainment of government targets. The LEA thus manages the local education system at the strategic level. However, most decisions about schools are now taken at the national level (funding, curriculum, targets and standards) or in the school itself (decisions about how to spend the allocated resources).<sup>3</sup>

**Governing bodies.** *There are four main types of state-supported school: Community, Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools (these new categories were introduced in September 1999). The vast majority of children and young people go to Community schools which operate under the direction of the LEA; the other types of school are additionally linked to a church or charity. In secondary education some schools have the additional status of being 'Specialist Colleges'. There are also a few City Technology Colleges, sponsored by the private sector but principally funded by central government. To complete the picture, there are the private 'independent' schools, catering for about 7% of secondary school pupils, which have different systems of funding and management; there are altogether 29 independent secondary schools in the North East.*

The state-supported schools have governing bodies which have to conform to the requirements of the DfEE. Members of these governing bodies are elected or appointed for a period of four years and receive no remuneration for their services. The governing body is made up of people from different groups, elected or appointed in different ways:

- *Parent governors* are elected by secret ballot of the parents of the school's students. At the time of their election, the parent governors must have a child at the school (although they may complete their term of office if the child leaves the school).
- *LEA governors* are appointed by the LEA and can be removed by the LEA.
- *Teacher governors* are elected by their colleagues to represent them and must resign as governors if they leave the school.
- Likewise, *support staff governors* are elected by their colleagues and must resign if they leave the school.
- *Co-opted governors* are appointed by the other members of the governing body. The co-optees should be chosen to ensure that the governing body has a balance of interests and they must include people from business. They can be removed from office by the rest of the governing body.
- *Foundation governors* are appointed to the governing bodies of Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools to represent the interests of the church or charity to which the school is linked. They can be removed from office by the appointing body.
- The *head teacher* is normally a member of the governing body (but can decide not to be).

The composition of governing bodies varies by type of school. A Community secondary school has five or six parent governors, four or five LEA governors, two teachers, one support staff governor, four or five co-opted members and, usually, the head teacher. Voluntary Aided or controlled schools are linked to a supporting body, generally the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church, which appoints 'foundation' governors to ensure that the character of the school (usually its religious character) is maintained.<sup>4</sup> In these schools, the majority of the governing body is made up of foundation governors: a Voluntary Aided secondary school has eight or eleven foundation governors, two or three parents, one or two from the LEA, two teachers and

one support staff governor. Voluntary Aided or Controlled schools do not have co-opted members. The size of governing body depends on the size of school. Primary schools have similar structures, but normally smaller numbers of governors.

There are some restrictions on who can become a school governor; for example, an individual included in a list of people prohibited or restricted from working with young people cannot be a governor, nor can a disqualified company director. But most people are eligible to serve as school governors and may do so as long as they are elected or selected within one of the categories. Many thousands of people serve as governors – there are 360,000 school governors in England and Wales – and governing schools represents the biggest opportunity for individuals to run public services. There is a national shortage of governors – a recent survey found that 9% of governor posts were vacant in primary schools and 8% in secondary schools. A major reason for this is thought to be the responsibilities and demands borne by governors.<sup>5</sup>

The governors are responsible for decisions on how to spend the school budget and they also make plans for the future, work to achieve and raise standards, and are responsible for appointing the head teacher.<sup>6</sup> Local Management of Schools means that most of the resources made available to the school, at least 85%, are now controlled by the schools themselves; the amount of money they receive from the LEA largely depends on the number of pupils. In Community schools, the LEA employs the staff, owns the school's property and is primarily responsible for deciding the arrangements for admissions. In Voluntary Aided or Controlled schools the governing body is the employer and admissions authority; in these schools, the foundation (church or charity) normally owns the school property and, in the case of Voluntary Aided schools, the foundation has to provide 15% of capital and repair costs.

Governors are offered training and support by the LEA to assist them in their role and ensure that they are aware of their duties and

responsibilities. The governing body generally meets once or twice a term; in addition, there are sub committees which deal with such matters as finance, staffing and personnel, the curriculum and premises. Meetings are not open to the public by right, but the agenda, minutes and papers of governors' meetings are available at the school. Governors must produce an annual report, which has to include details of the governors and information about any forthcoming elections. The report must be sent to every parent at least two weeks before the annual meeting at which the report is presented and discussed. Resolutions may also be presented and agreed by parents at the annual meeting. Some schools in the North East now have websites, though very few of them have any information about the governing body<sup>7</sup>. However, most schools do make a positive effort to inform and involve parents in the running of the school and will encourage them to become governors.

Most schools in the North East are Community schools. In the secondary sector, there are 134 Community schools in the region, 27 Voluntary Aided schools and one Voluntary Controlled school (there are no Foundation schools). Since 1993, some schools have acquired the additional status of *Specialist Colleges*, having made successful bids for extra government funding to focus particularly on Technology, Art, Sport or Languages. Such schools also have to secure resources from private sponsors. Their governance is unchanged, except that they have to include representatives of these sponsors on the governing body. It is intended that, by 2003, a quarter of secondary schools will be designated Specialist Colleges.

There are two *City Technology Colleges* (CTCs) in the North East: Emmanuel College in Gateshead (founded in 1989) and Macmillan College in Middlesbrough (founded in 1990). CTCs were established by the previous government as independent organisations providing secondary education to a wide range of pupils, not charging fees, and funded directly by central government and also by private sector sponsors. The remit, catchment area and governance of

each CTC was agreed by negotiation between sponsors and the Secretary of State. A CTC is owned by a charitable company and the governing body comprises the directors of the company and co-opted members. Like other state-supported schools, CTCs are subject to inspection by OFSTED, but they operate independently of the LEA.

Emmanuel College was established with a strong Biblical Christian ethos. The Chair of the governing body (or board of directors) is Peter Vardy of Reg Vardy Ltd., a major car dealer based in the North East which sponsors the college. The governing body has ten members, of which two are women. Macmillan College is named after former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan who was Stockton's MP. The College has 15 members on its governing body, including three women and two parent governors; the Chair of the governors is Dr John Marshall, Chair of Durham Health Authority, and most of the members are from businesses which sponsor the college. New governors are chosen by the existing governors and vacancies on the governing body are not openly advertised. Both CTCs in the North East produce Annual Reports and also have websites – as might be expected of technology colleges – providing some information about these institutions<sup>8</sup>.

The CTC concept is now being revived by the present government. The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, announced in March 2000 proposals for 'City Academies', schools which would be set up and managed by business, churches and charities in partnership with the government – but without the involvement of the LEA. These schools would replace failing or underachieving schools, mainly in inner city areas, and the first is expected to open in 2001. In the North East, Peter Vardy, the Chair of Emmanuel CTC, has welcomed the initiative and is reported to be ready to invest £12m in six such schools in the region.

In some areas, an extra layer of governance has been added: *Education Action Zones* (EAZs). These bring together a number of schools in an area under a partnership arrangement with the aim of raising

attainment. The government has put additional funding into the EAZs and local businesses are also contributing resources. In an EAZ, innovations will be tried out such as community libraries and advice centres in schools and extending school hours or opening in the summer; in addition, EAZs have freedom to experiment with the curriculum and even with staff pay and conditions. An EAZ is run by an 'Action Forum' which has representatives from local primary and secondary schools and the LEA and usually from the TEC, colleges and/or universities, and local businesses.

In the first round of designations, three EAZs were set up in the North East: in the West End of Newcastle (involving two secondary, three middle and 14 primary schools); South Tyneside (two secondary and nine primary schools); and in East Middlesbrough (four secondary and 11 primary schools). A further six EAZs start in 2000, in Ashington, Sunderland, Easington and Seaham, Peterlee, North Stockton and East Cleveland.

Two of the three EAZs underway in the North East provided information for the study. East Middlesbrough EAZ reported that it had an Action Forum of 62 members meeting four times a year, although many decisions are delegated to the executive group of 12 members. South Tyneside EAZ is run by an Action Forum of 46 members who serve as trustees. Neither of these EAZs have meetings open to the public, but East Middlesbrough will provide papers and minutes of meetings and holds an AGM which is open to the public. Both EAZs publish an Annual Report and a Strategic Plan and they maintain a register of the interests of Forum members which is available for public inspection.

### **Sixth Form Colleges**

Sixth form students (aged 16 to 18) are educated within secondary schools, Further Education (FE) colleges or in separate Sixth Form Colleges. The Sixth Form Colleges were formerly funded by the LEA and largely controlled by the LEA with, in some cases, the involvement of a foundation

<sup>1</sup> For a listing of LEAs and secondary schools (including independent schools) see: *The Education Authorities Directory*, published annually by the School Government Publishing Co. Ltd. This publisher also produces a *Primary Education Directory*.

<sup>2</sup> Schools which opted out of LEA control were called Grant Maintained schools. Provisions enabling schools to do this were established by the previous government in 1988 and abolished by the present government in 1999. Schools had to hold a ballot of parents if they wished to become Grant Maintained and received extra funding which came directly from the government's Funding Agency for Schools. Astley High School in Northumberland was the only school in the North East where a ballot to opt out was successful; following the abolition of this category it has now returned to being a Community school.

<sup>3</sup> The long-term future of LEAs is uncertain. The possibility of abolishing LEAs and handing over their functions and powers to the new Learning and Skills Councils (to be established next year) is currently being explored by researchers at the Institute of Public Policy Research (*Guardian Education*, 29.2.2000).

Table 8.1: Chairs of the governing bodies of Sixth Form Colleges in the North East

College	Chair
Bede College, Billingham	Barrie Wetton
Hartlepool Sixth Form College	Neil Midgley
Prior Pursglove College, Guisborough	Colin Vaux
Queen Elizabeth College, Darlington	Lewis Gordon
St. Mary's College, Middlesbrough	Gerry Kennedy
Stockton Sixth Form College	John Maloney
Tynemouth College	Jean Turner

(normally a church body). In 1992 they were removed from LEA control and became independent bodies in the Further Education sector funded directly by the government's Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). There are over 100 Sixth Form Colleges nationally, of which seven are in the North East.

Under the arrangements set by the previous government, at least half the members of the governing body had to be from business. Reforms recently introduced by the FEFC now require that only one third of the governing body should be from business,

<sup>4</sup> In England, the Church of England has 4,550 primary and 198 secondary schools and the Roman Catholic Church has 1,760 primary and 363 secondary schools. Thus, the Church of England is particularly prominent in the primary sector, running a quarter of primary schools.

<sup>5</sup> 'Governor crisis confronts schools', *Guardian*, 29.12.99.

<sup>6</sup> Information on the work of governors is given on the DfEE School Governor's Centre website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/governor](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/governor)

<sup>7</sup> Links to North East schools' websites can be found at [www.thenortheast.com/education](http://www.thenortheast.com/education) We found only one out of 34 primary schools' websites which listed the governors (Grange Primary School, Hartlepool). Only one of the 22 state secondary school websites listed governors (Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School, Spennymoor).

<sup>8</sup> The websites are: [www.emmanuelctc.org.uk](http://www.emmanuelctc.org.uk) and [www.macmillan-ctc.org.uk](http://www.macmillan-ctc.org.uk) The Macmillan College website includes a list of members of the governing body.

with the other members comprising representatives of the staff, students, parents, the local authority and the community. There may also be co-optees and, for those colleges linked to a foundation, three or four foundation representatives. Governing bodies range in size from 12 to 20 members.

The governing bodies of Sixth Form Colleges have the same rules of governance as Further Education Colleges (see below). The governing body is itself responsible for maintaining a balance in its membership, deciding upon the exact number of representatives from the different sectors and



the selection of business representatives and co-optees. Table 8.1 lists the Chairs of the governing bodies of the region's Sixth Form Colleges, all but one of whom is male.

### **Further Education (FE) Colleges**

In the tertiary sector of education, which largely comprises 'general' FE colleges, about 70% of the students are part-time and the majority are mature students, often doing work-related training. Many of the full-time students are younger and undertaking post-GCSE study, including 'A' levels and GNVQs.

The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act dramatically changed the institutional framework for FE colleges (and Sixth Form Colleges). The colleges and their property moved from LEA control and ownership to independent, self-governing bodies funded by central government through the FEFC. The FEFC distributes £3bn a year and oversees the work of the FE colleges, including quality assessment.

Each FE college is run by a governing body. The legal framework within which a college operates depends on whether it is a further

education corporation (which most are), a company limited by guarantee or a charitable trust (all have charitable status). However, the governing bodies have similar compositions. In August 1999, the government introduced changes to the rules of governance and composition of these bodies.<sup>1</sup> Previously, they had been dominated by business, with at least half the members drawn from business, (in practice, a widely drawn category including public sector managers), and were almost totally self-selecting. They did not have to include representation from the local authority, the community, staff or students. The recent changes were a response to concerns about this lack of balance, poor accountability - and a reaction to financial scandals in some colleges.

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<sup>1</sup> Further Education Funding Council (1999) *Instrument and Articles of Government: Modifications*, FEFC Circular 99/30 (available on [www.fefc.ac.uk](http://www.fefc.ac.uk))

**Table 8.2: FE colleges in the North East**

FE College	Website			Budget	Chair of Board
		Full-time	Part-time	1999/2000 (£m)	Of Governors
*Gateshead College	<a href="http://www.gateshead.ac.uk">www.gateshead.ac.uk</a>	1,500	10,000	12	Barry Morgan
*Newcastle College	<a href="http://www.ncl-coll.ac.uk">www.ncl-coll.ac.uk</a>	6,000	32,000	34	Laurie Caple Former Chief Executive, Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust
North Tyneside College	<a href="http://www.ntyneside.ac.uk">www.ntyneside.ac.uk</a>	1,800	8,500		Ian Gordon OBE Former Conservative Councillor, North Tyneside MBC Retired partner, Binder Hamlyn, accountants Member (magistrate), Northumbria Police Authority
South Tyneside College	<a href="http://www.stc.ac.uk">www.stc.ac.uk</a>	6,000	16,500		Dennis Lynch
*City of Sunderland College	<a href="http://www.citysun.ac.uk">www.citysun.ac.uk</a>	3,000	26,000	24	Donald Chroston Retired Director of Finance, Sunderland Health Authority Board member, Priority Healthcare Wearside NHS Trust
*Bishop Auckland College	<a href="http://www.bacoll.ac.uk">www.bacoll.ac.uk</a>	800	15,000	7.2	John Moorley
*Darlington College of Technology	<a href="http://www.darlington.ac.uk">www.darlington.ac.uk</a>	1,500	7,000	12	Alistair MacConachie
Derwentside College	<a href="http://www.derwentside.ac.uk">www.derwentside.ac.uk</a>	950	4,000	6.5	Jeff Clayton Principal of Clayton (property) Management Services
East Durham Community College	<a href="http://www.eastdurham.ac.uk">www.eastdurham.ac.uk</a>	1,500	20,000	8	Ian Williams
*New College Durham	<a href="http://www.newdur.ac.uk">www.newdur.ac.uk</a>	2,500	1,000	17	Philip Holton Senior manager in NHS
*Hartlepool College of Further Education	<a href="http://www.hartlepoolfe.ac.uk">www.hartlepoolfe.ac.uk</a>	1,200	7,000	7.5	Ray Waller Labour councillor and former leader, Hartlepool Borough Council Chair, Owton/Rossmere SRB Partnership
Cleveland College of Art & Design		1,000	1,500		Bryan Hanson OBE Labour councillor, Hartlepool Borough Council Former board member, Teesside Development Corporation
*Middlesbrough College	<a href="http://www.mbro.ac.uk">www.mbro.ac.uk</a>	2,000	5,000	9	Hazel Pearson Former Conservative councillor, Cleveland County Council
*Teesside Tertiary College	<a href="http://www.ttc.ac.uk">www.ttc.ac.uk</a>	2,300	6,000	11	Tom Sneddon Retired senior manager, engineering industry
*Redcar & Cleveland College	<a href="http://www.cleveland.ac.uk">www.cleveland.ac.uk</a>	1,300	6,000	8	Paul Booth
*Stockton & Billingham College	<a href="http://www.stockbill.ac.uk">www.stockbill.ac.uk</a>	1,100	10,000	9.1	Dr Frank King
*Northumberland College	<a href="http://www.northland.ac.uk">www.northland.ac.uk</a>	1,500	10,000	10	Peter Elliott Manager, Shaw Project

Source: names of Chairs provided by FEFC, Northern Region, January 2000

\*denotes respondents to the questionnaire survey

The newly-constituted governing bodies of FE colleges have between 12 and 20 members. They now have only one third of members from business (between four and seven members) and representatives of the staff, students, the local authority and the community (between one and three members from each of these groups). Colleges can also have up to two parent representatives and up to three co-optees. The college principal is expected to be on the governing body. Within these guidelines, each college's governing body is free to decide on its exact composition and size.

Members are chosen by processes of election and selection. The staff and student bodies and the recognised parents' association elect their representatives; given that many students are part-time and some attend only for a year, some colleges have had difficulties in finding parents and students willing to serve on the governing body. The local authorities within the college's catchment area nominate their representatives. Colleges can choose which community groups may nominate a member, but the choice of representative rests with the community organisation itself. Business representatives and co-optees are selected and appointed by the governing body; potential new members are found through individual recommendations and from applications in response to external advertising of vacancies. They are initially nominated to the governing body by a Search Committee (a sub-committee of the governing body). The business, community and co-opted members should have a link with the college's activities, but do not have to live within the college's catchment area.

Governors of FE colleges are normally elected or appointed to serve for a period of four years, with the possibility of re-election or re-appointment, and they receive no remuneration for their services. The amount of time they spend on college business varies widely; our survey found that some Chairs devote a day a month, but one spends as much as two days a week and, another, three days a week. Other members typically spend half a day or a day per month. On most college matters, the governing body is the ultimate authority. (The Secretary of

State does, however, have the right to intervene if necessary – and can remove the governors - and the FEFC may appoint two additional members to a governing body).

These governing bodies have responsibility for running large publicly-funded organisations – the biggest college in the North East, Newcastle College, has an annual budget of £34m. And they also need to respond to a variety of stakeholders, operating within a more complex arrangement of governance than when colleges were controlled by the LEA.

The 17 FE colleges in the North East are listed in Table 8.2, which includes the names of the Chairs of governing bodies and, where known, their backgrounds. The Chair, who is elected by the members of the governing body, can have a major impact on the work of the governing body and the direction of the college. Most of them have management backgrounds, in several cases in the public sector, and only one of the 17 colleges (Middlesbrough College) has a female Chair.

The FE colleges were surveyed by questionnaire in the latter part of 1999, at a time of transition when most had not yet reconstituted their governing bodies in response to the government's reforms. FE colleges (and Sixth Form colleges) have to implement the changes 'as soon as possible' but the terms of office of existing governors can run their course.

Twelve colleges provided information about their governing bodies. Only 27% of members were female. 2% were from ethnic minorities and 1% were disabled. The age composition was more balanced than many other public institutions in the North East, with 24% of governors under the age of 45.

The recent changes in the governance of FE colleges include a requirement that they keep a register of the financial interests of governors and that the register is available for public inspection. The public must also be given access to the annual accounts, the three year strategic plan, the complaints procedure, the code of conduct for governors and papers relating to the meetings of the governing body and its sub-committees,

including the agenda, minutes and reports. However, meetings of the governing body do not have to be open to the public; only a third of colleges responding to the survey allowed the public to attend these meetings. Only two of the 11 colleges, Darlington and Derwentside, have a public annual meeting. Derwentside College has made very successful efforts to attract parents and the community to their annual meeting - the college writes to the parents, local businesses and community groups inviting them to attend, and the meeting includes not only the presentation of the annual report but also prize giving and students' participation in the event. Derwentside College said they had 300 members of the public at their last annual meeting.

FE colleges produce an annual report which is available on request (although one college, Bishop Auckland, charges £5 a copy) and these reports contain a list of the governors. Some reports only give a list of names, but at least five colleges in the North East do give some details about governors' backgrounds and interests. Sixteen of the 17 colleges have websites, but only three of them have any information about their governing body. Only one, Teesside Tertiary College, gives full details of names of governors and background information about them. Teesside Tertiary College intends also to put the college's accounts, annual report and minutes of governing body meetings on their website. Others would do well to emulate that commitment to openness.

The operating context for FE colleges will change next year when the new Learning and Skills Councils take over responsibility for them (and also for Sixth Form Colleges) from the FEFC. This change is intended to bring more coherence to post-16 education and training, by having one organisation responsible for Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education and the training functions currently undertaken by TECs (see Chapter 11).

## Universities

The University (higher education) sector is composed of a variety of institutions, formed at different times and in different

circumstances.<sup>1</sup> In the North East there are five universities: Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Teesside and Sunderland (the Open University also has a base in the region). Durham is the third oldest university in England, founded in 1832. Newcastle University is one of the redbrick civic universities established in the late nineteenth century, but until the 1960s was part of Durham University (called King's College before it was granted independent status in 1963). Northumbria, Teesside and Sunderland are former polytechnics, now with university status. In the 1960s, LEAs brought together existing local colleges to form polytechnics which aimed to widen access to higher education. The polytechnics were owned and controlled by the LEAs until 1988, when the government took them out of LEA control and set up separate statutory corporations to run them, with funding provided by the government through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Subsequently, the difference of status (although not resources) between the polytechnics and the universities was ended and the polytechnics became universities in 1992 through the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act.

The governance of the old (pre-1992) universities basically involves three bodies: the Council, Senate and Court. The Council is the over-arching governing body which has ultimate control and decision making powers and is made up of senior academics and representatives from outside the university. The Senate - usually exercising a considerable amount of real power - comprises academic staff and is in charge of academic matters. The Court (or Congregation) is a large body, often with a membership of hundreds, which has representation from outside the university. But the Council has overall responsibility for the university's affairs, including finance. The Statutes of Durham University, for instance, give the University's Council extensive powers, including 'custody, control and disposition of all its property and finances', together with responsibility for the appointment of all staff and shared responsibility for teaching and research. University Councils range in size from 30 to

over 50 members, with the majority of members from outside the university.

In the new (post-1992) universities, the Board of Governors (formally, the Board of the University's Higher Education Corporation) has overall responsibility. The 1992 Act and the instruments of government of the new universities state that a Board should have between 12 and 24 members, of which at least half are 'independent' members (not staff, students or local councillors). The independent members should have experience of industry, commerce or professional practice and they are appointed by the Board of Governors. The rest of the Board's members are staff and student representatives and co-opted members. The co-optees may include members of staff not elected as representatives and this group may include local councillors as well. The independent and co-opted members are not elected by, or accountable to, any organisation other than the Board of Governors.

Durham University has the largest governing body (Council) of the five universities in the North East, with altogether 39 members. This includes:

- Eleven ex officio members (Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deans of Faculty, the Dean of Durham – an historic link with the Cathedral, and the Chair of the Durham University Society).
- Four members from outside the university, appointed by the Chancellor.
- Eight members elected by the academic staff and two elected by the non-academic staff.
- Three local councillors: two appointed by Durham County Council, one by Durham City Council.
- One member appointed by the Court of Newcastle University.
- The President and the Treasurer of Durham Students' Union (ex officio members).
- Eight co-optees, appointed by the Council itself.

Eighteen of the 39 are university staff and 12 members have been elected by staff or

students, but all members are expected to serve as individuals, 'not as representatives of particular sections or interests' (see Annex 8.1).

The Council of Newcastle University has 35 members, of which 14 are members of staff (six ex officio) and four are students. The rest are independent or co-opted members. The structure is similar to that at Durham. In both institutions, most of the members from outside the university are from private sector businesses. Both Durham and Newcastle advertise or, at least, announce vacancies and at both universities there is a maximum term of office, normally six years.

The new universities have far fewer members of staff on their Boards of Governors and these Boards are like those in private sector business. Teesside University, for example, currently has 25 members on the Board of Governors, of which 13 are independent members and five are co-opted; these members are appointed by the Board itself. There is only one member elected by the Academic Board (the staff) and one student member, and the Board is predominantly made up of business people. Northumbria and Sunderland have similar arrangements, both with most of their members unelected and from outside the institution. Teesside has chosen not to have a maximum term of office; its longest-serving independent member has so far served for 12 years.

Information about the characteristics of governors (Council/Board members) was provided by three of the five universities (Durham, Newcastle and Teesside). These institutions have altogether 98 governors, of which only 19 (19%) are women, only one is reported to be disabled and only two are from ethnic minority groups. Fourteen (14%) are aged under 45 (this presumably will include the student representatives); 78 (80%) are aged 45 to 65; and six (6%) are aged 65 and over. The governing bodies of universities are even more dominated by middle-aged men than are the FE colleges. The universities stressed that they seek to appoint people having particular expertise or experience and aim for a balance of relevant skills and abilities but this seems not to

achieve balance in terms of equal opportunities and diversity.

Members receive no remuneration for their service on university Councils/Boards (but it is a part of the work of those university staff serving on these bodies). The amount of time they devote to this varies considerably. One of the universities, for example, reported that the Chair devotes two days per month and the other members half a day per month. The time commitment depends on the position held, with the Chairs usually the most active of the non-staff members, and also depends on the number of committees on which individuals serve.

The Council/Board meetings at the three universities responding to our survey are not open to the public. Agendas, minutes and papers are available in the Learning Resource Centre and by application to the Secretary at Teesside University, but only available to members of staff at Durham and Newcastle universities (where this material is also posted on their internal websites). These three universities maintain a register of interests of Council/Board members, available for inspection by the public at Teesside and Newcastle, but only open to inspection by members of the Council and of the university at Durham. Both Newcastle and Teesside have codes of conduct for Council/Board members, while at Durham the Registrar, as Secretary to the Council, draws the attention of members to their responsibilities and what is expected of them as set out in the Council Standing Orders. The Standing Orders include reference to the Nolan Committee's 'seven principles of public life' which are to be observed by Council members.

None of the three universities responding to the survey holds an annual public meeting, but Teesside is planning to have one and Durham holds a convocation of staff and graduates. The Committee of University Chairmen states that an annual report and financial statement for a university should be made 'widely available outside the institution and ways should be found by which the public, or the local community, can comment'. But practice varies and the limited information provided by universities

makes it difficult to assess them and comment on their activities. It also often requires some effort to obtain annual reports and find out who runs the universities.

Newcastle University's annual report is essentially a magazine presenting highlights; it has little financial information and makes no mention of the governing body (the Council). Durham University has done away with a published annual report and, instead, the autumn edition of the alumni magazine, *Durham First* is an 'annual review' edition – with only a paragraph of a financial summary (although a full statement is available on request) and nothing about the governors. Northumbria University's annual report does list the governors, but offers no details about them. Sunderland University apparently did not produce a report in 1997/98 and the 1998/99 was not yet available at the end of 1999. Teesside University's report stands out as a good example – it has a photograph and some background information about each governor. All five universities in the North East have websites, but none of these give any information about the governors on their Councils or Boards.

## Conclusion

The governance of educational institutions operates through several different models, with a variety of structural arrangements and accountabilities.

There are intriguing paradoxes. School governors will often devote more time and effort, and have greater real responsibilities, than governors of a university. Yet being a university governor carries far more prestige – and so attracts the 'great and the good'. Schools are more closely monitored, held to account and have to operate in a relatively open manner in comparison with FE colleges or universities. But the colleges and universities have much bigger budgets. In addition, the governing bodies of schools embrace a range of interests and most of their members are elected or appointed by those various interests. The governing bodies of the new universities, in particular, are largely appointed by existing members of the board of governors and bring with them

primarily business expertise. There is evidently scope for reform – already underway in the FE colleges – to ensure that educational institutions are more open and accountable to their many different stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> For a useful discussion of governance in the old and new universities, see: P. Ackroyd and S. Ackroyd (1999) 'Problems of university governance in Britain: Is more accountability the solution?' *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 12(2), pp. 171-185. See also: *Guide for Members of Governing Bodies of Universities and Colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, Committee of University Chairmen, 1998 (available from the Higher Education Funding Council for England).

## ANNEX 8.1 UNIVERSITIES IN THE NORTH EAST

There are five universities in the North East. Information on their governors is from their responses to our survey and requests for information, supplemented, where possible, by details given in their Annual Reports or Calendars, biographies in *Who's Who* (2000) and *Debrett's People of Today* (2000), and local sources.

### **University of Durham**

Tel: 0191 374 3000

Website: [www.dur.ac.uk](http://www.dur.ac.uk)

Full-time students: 8843 undergraduates; 1365 postgraduates

Part-time students: 700 undergraduates; 1400 postgraduates

Budget 1999/2000: £110m

#### University Council

Ex officio members (11)

The Chancellor; Vice-Chancellor; Pro-Vice-Chancellors; Deans of Faculties of Arts, Science, Social Science; Dean of Colleges; Dean of Durham; Chair of the Durham University Society

Members from outside the university, appointed by the Chancellor (4)

Dr R Hawley CBE (Chair): Former Chief Executive, British Energy plc (1995-97); Nuclear Electric plc (1992-96); Rolls Royce plc/NEI plc (1961-92); Chair, Taylor Woodrow plc (1999-)

Sir David Goodall (Vice Chair). Retired British High Commissioner to India. Chair, Leonard Cheshire Foundation. Visiting professor, Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool.

Lady Eccles of Moulton. Chair, Ealing, Hammersmith & Hounslow Health Authority. Director, Times Newspapers Holdings Ltd. Previous directorships include: Tyne Tees TV; J Sainsbury plc; Yorkshire Electricity Group.

Mr J S Ward OBE. Former regional director, Barclays Bank plc. Previous directorships include Northern Rock plc; Northumbrian Water Group plc; Tyne & Wear Development Corporation.

Members elected by the academic staff (8)

Members elected by the non-academic staff (2)

Members appointed by Durham County Council (2)

Councillor D Bates

Councillor N D P Ross

Member appointed by Durham City Council (1)

Councillor T S Gill

Member appointed by the Court of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (1)

Professor W R Jones

The President and the Treasurer of Durham Students' Union (2)

Co-opted members (maximum of 8)

Sir David Chapman. Stockbroker; Vice President, Merrill Lynch. Director, Northern Rock plc. Former Director, Wise Speke Ltd.

Mr R T Kingdon CBE. Formerly Chief Executive, Davy Corporation.

Mr C Moyes. Executive Director, Go-Ahead Group plc.

Mr J A Slider. Deputy Managing Director, Samsung Electronics Mfg UK Ltd.

Mrs C R Thornton-Berry. Previously Chair, Northallerton Health Authority and Northallerton Health Services NHS Trust. Magistrate.

Ms Sue Underwood. Director, North East Museums Service. Member, North East Regional Assembly.

Mr B J Worthy. Formerly County Education Officer, Cleveland County Council.

Mr J F Yaxley. Formerly worker for Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service, 1960-93.

### **University of Newcastle upon Tyne**

Tel: 0191 222 6000



Website: [www.ncl.ac.uk](http://www.ncl.ac.uk)  
Full time students: 11,900  
Part-time students: 4,600  
Budget 1999/2000: £165m

### **University Council**

Ex officio members of staff (6)  
Vice Chancellor; Pro-Vice-Chancellors; Dean of Medicine  
Members of staff (8) appointed by Senate  
Ex officio members, Students' Union (3)  
Students' Union Communications Officer; Education Officer; Welfare Officer  
Student member (1)  
Independent members from outside the university, appointed by the Council (9)  
Mr Nigel Sherlock: Stockbroker; Chair, Wise Speke Ltd  
Mr Alastair Balls CB: Chief Executive, International Centre for Life Newcastle; former  
Chief Executive, Tyne & Wear Development Corporation  
Mr D K Wilson  
Mrs S M Aldred  
Mr Lew Aviss. Personnel Director, Siemens Micro-electronics. Former President, NE  
Chamber of Commerce. Former Board member, Northern Development Co.  
Mrs J Flanagan  
Mr R H Maudsley. Former MD, Rolls-Royce Industrial Power Group. Board  
member, One NorthEast.  
Mr P V Morris  
Sir John Willis  
Co-opted members (8)  
Mr I L Clarke  
Mr M N Duffy  
Mr C J Hilton  
Mr Bill Midgley. Former Chief Executive, Newcastle Building Society. President, NE  
Chamber of Commerce. Board member, Safer Newcastle Partnership, Newcastle  
Initiative, Northern Business Forum, etc.  
Mr H Morgan-Williams. Chair and Chief Executive, Canford Group plc. Vice-Chair, CBI  
Northern Regional Council. Board member, Sunderland City TEC; One NorthEast.  
Mr A R Pender  
Ms Sue Underwood. Director, North East Museums Service. Member, North East  
Regional Assembly.  
Mr G C Wilson

### **University of Teesside**

Tek: 01642 218121  
Website: [www.tees.ac.uk](http://www.tees.ac.uk)  
Full time students: 8000  
Part time students: 6000  
Budget 1999/2000: £53m

### **Board of Governors**

Vice Chancellor  
Staff members (3)  
Staff (Academic Board) nominee (1)  
Student nominee (1)  
General secretary, Students' Union  
Independent members (13)

Mr John P Hackney (Chair): Non-executive Chair, Post Office Users' National Council  
 Mr Tom Shovlin: Chief Financial Officer, ICI Chemicals & Polymers  
 Sir Ian Wrigglesworth (Deputy Chair): Former MP, Stockton South. Former Chair, Northern Business Forum; Northern CBI. Chair, UK Land Estates Ltd. Deputy Chair, John Livingston & Sons Ltd  
 Mrs Judyth J Thomas: Former Chair, North Tees Health NHS Trust  
 Mr John R Foster: Former Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Borough Council. Chair, South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trust; Tees Valley Business Links. Board member, Housing Corporation; Audit Commission; Tees Valley Development Co.  
 Mr John D McDougall: Managing Director, W S Atkins Consultants Ltd. Chair, Tees Valley TEC.  
 Dr Ifiti Lone: GP, Middlesbrough. Board member, Middlesbrough and Eston Primary Care Group. J.P.  
 Mr Barry Shaw: Chief Constable, Cleveland Constabulary.  
 Mrs Susan White: Employee Development Director, Presswork Metals Ltd. Governor, Darlington College of Technology.  
 Judge Leslie Spittle: Circuit Judge, Teesside Crown Court.  
 Mr Ernie Haidon: Educational Consultant. Chief Executive, National Information & Learning Technologies Association. Former Inspector, H M Inspectorate of Schools.  
 Mr Christopher S Lord: Head Teacher, Laurence Jackson School, Guisborough.  
 Mrs Margaret Fay: Managing Director, Tyne Tees Television.  
 Co-opted members (maximum of 6)  
 Mr Jonathan Blackie: Director of Regeneration, One NorthEast.  
 Mr Sandy Anderson: Senior Vice-President, Technology, ICI. Deputy Lieutenant, County Durham.  
 Mr R H Goldfield: Managing Director, Teesside International Airport Ltd.  
 Dr Peter Middleton: Chair, Football League Ltd. Chair,. Luton Airport.  
 Mr John Foster: Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Borough Council. Board member, Tees Valley TEC.

### **University of Northumbria at Newcastle**

Tel: 0191 232 6002

Website: [www.unn.ac.uk](http://www.unn.ac.uk)

Full time students: 13,500

Part time students: 10,000

Budget: £96m

### **Board of Governors**

Ex officio members (2)

Vice Chancellor

President, Students' Union

Internal representation, university staff (4)

Academic Board representatives (2); Admin and Support Services representative (1);

Teaching Staff representative (1)

Independent members (maximum of 13)

Gavin Black (Chair): Deputy Chair, Chesterton International plc (property company)

Joe Mills (Deputy Chair): Chair, Sunderland Health Authority

Hadyn Biddle: Chief Executive, George Bateman & Sons (brewers)

Lord Glenamara: Chancellor of the University. Former local MP.

Peter McKendrick: Former Managing Partner, Sanderson Townsend (estate agency)

Andrea Wonfor: Managing Director, Granada Television

Ray Cole: Formerly personnel/marketing, Procter & Gamble plc.

Peter Allan: Joint Senior Partner, Ward Hadaway (solicitor)

Sue Wilson: Former Chief Executive, The Newcastle Initiative

Bob Howard: Former Northern Regional Secretary, TUC  
Andrew Gibson: Chief Executive, Sunderland Hospitals NHS Trust  
Co-opted members (maximum of 3)  
Sir Miles Irving: Chair, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust  
Pat Hodgson: Manager at Department of Social Security, Longbenton  
Local Authority member (1)  
Vacancy

### **University of Sunderland**

Tel: 0191 515 2000  
Website: [www.sunderland.ac.uk](http://www.sunderland.ac.uk)  
Full time students: 9,000  
Part time students: 5,000

### **Board of Governors**

Ex officio member (1)  
Vice-Chancellor  
Student union nominees (2)  
Member representing senior management (1)  
Member nominated by Academic Board (1)  
Member elected by non-teaching staff (1)  
Member elected by full-time members of staff (1)  
Independent members (10)  
Bill Darling CBE (Chair): Chair, Gateshead & South Tyneside Health Authority.  
Proprietor pharmacist.  
Frank Nicholson (Deputy Chair): Former Managing Director, Vaux Breweries Ltd.  
Deputy Lieutenant and former High Sheriff of County Durham.  
Terry Maxwell Hogg  
Dr Sue Hurley: Retired Regional Director, Open University.  
Peter Moth: Former Executive Director of Programmes, Tyne Tees Television.  
John Anderson CBE: Chair, Sunderland City TEC. Managing Director, Anderson  
Mercedes Benz, Sunderland. Chair, Sunderland City Careers Service; National Glass  
Centre; Sun FM. Vice-Chair, Newcastle Building Society. Local director, Coutts and  
Co.  
Dr Pamela Denham: Retired Regional Director, GO-NE.  
Robin P Webster: Regional Agent, Bank of England, Newcastle upon Tyne.  
Anne Tye  
Philip J Walsh  
Co-opted members (2)  
Councillor P Stewart  
Ian A Todd: Principal, City of Sunderland Colleges

## 9. POLICE AUTHORITIES

At national level, the Home Secretary oversees the work of the police, while at local level police forces are governed by statutory Police Authorities which represent the local community. Chief constables are responsible for the day to day management, direction and control of police forces and have 'operational independence'. Under this 'tripartite system', no one interest has overall control and this is intended to provide checks and balances over the management and operation of the police.

Police Authorities have some important responsibilities – for drawing up the police force budget, developing strategies and plans and appointing senior police officers. Before the mid-1990s, Police Authorities comprised local councillors (two thirds of the members) and magistrates (one third), but were then subject to change and reform under the provisions of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 (now consolidated in the Police Act 1996). The Conservative government sought to make the Authorities more 'businesslike' and subject to more central control and Kenneth Clarke, then Home Secretary, initially proposed that half the members of Police Authorities – including the Chair – should be appointed solely by the Home Secretary. Following strong opposition to this centralising measure in the House of Lords, this controversial proposal was substantially watered down. Instead, the new Police Authorities were restructured such that just over half the members are councillors and the rest are local magistrates and 'independent' members – local people who are neither councillors nor magistrates. Independent members are appointed through a complex process involving the councillor and magistrate members of the Authority and the Home Secretary. Thus, Police Authorities are a mixture of indirectly elected and appointed people, they are neither democratically elected bodies nor appointed quangos.<sup>1</sup>

Police Authorities normally receive little publicity and most members of the public

are probably unaware of their existence. Their role is, however, a significant one and, from time to time, they can become the focus of attention. When the police become embroiled in major controversy – for example, 'Operation Lancet', involving the suspension of high profile officers in the Cleveland Police – the Police Authority becomes highly visible as the body charged with responding to local concerns and ensuring effective local policing.

### Who runs the Police Authorities in the North East?

There are 43 police forces in England and Wales and three in the North East: Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland. Each police force has a Police Authority, normally made up of 17 members, of whom nine are councillors, three are magistrates and five are appointed as independent members.

There are altogether 51 members of the North East's Police Authorities (see Annex 9.1). 37 (73%) are male. None of the region's Police Authorities report that they have disabled members. Each has one member from an ethnic minority group. Both Durham and Cleveland have provided an age breakdown. Durham has two members aged under 45, 11 are aged 45 to 65, and 4 are over 65. The profile for Cleveland is similar: one under 45, 13 aged 45 to 65 and three over 65. Police Authority members cannot serve beyond the age of 70.

The information provided by Police Authorities about their members and backgrounds is limited, but does suggest that, in terms of their composition, Police Authorities are not representative of the local community. In particular, few are under the age of 45. Many are retired or are full-time councillors and a surprising number are self-employed. Most of the independent members have, or have had, professional occupations. Those sections of the community most likely to have had direct experience of being policed, especially

younger working class people, are hardly represented among the members of the region's Police Authorities.

The overall profile of the membership of Police Authorities in the North East looks to be similar to that of local councillors, despite the addition of independent members. Three quarters are male and most are middle aged or older. The Association of Police Authorities and the Home Office are seeking to broaden the membership, notably to include more members from the ethnic minorities, and this is having some success nationally.<sup>2</sup> But to a large extent, broadening the range of people serving on Police Authorities depends upon attracting a broader range of people to become councillors or magistrates. The diversity provided by the input of independent members is welcome, but will not be sufficient to make Police Authorities much more representative of the communities they serve and to whom they are accountable.

### **The appointment of Police Authority members**

Each of the three constituent elements of a Police Authority are selected in different ways. The nine councillor members are nominated by the relevant councils<sup>3</sup> and appointed on an annual basis by a joint committee of representatives from these local authorities. Membership must reflect the political balance of the parties on the nominating councils. The three magistrates are appointed by a selection panel of the Magistrates Courts Committee. The third group, independent members, are chosen by a complex process. A nomination panel, comprising a Home Office appointee, a representative of the Police Authority appointed by councillor and magistrate members, and another panel member chosen by the Home Office and the Authority, draws up a list of, usually, 20 candidates. These nominations are sought through advertisements in the press or by identifying and encouraging individuals to apply. The list of 20 is submitted to the Home Secretary who shortlists 10 from the list and the Authority's councillor and magistrate

members then select and appoint from the Home Secretary's short list.

Individuals cannot be appointed to serve if they are under 21 or aged 70 or over, if they are bankrupt, or if they have been sentenced to more than three months imprisonment within five years of appointment (or since appointment). Additionally, independent members must live or work in the area and not be councillors or magistrates in the area served by the Authority. Officers or employees of a Police Authority or relevant council are also ineligible for appointment as independent members, with the exception of teachers or lecturers.

Councillors are appointed for a year while magistrates and independent members are appointed for a period of four years. All can be re-appointed for a further term of office. The Chair is elected by the Police Authority members at the Authority's Annual Meeting.

### **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration<sup>4</sup>**

A Police Authority has a statutory duty to 'secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police force in its area'. Members of a Police Authority have collective responsibility for allocating the police force budget, monitoring performance and consulting the public. The Authority has to approve and publish an annual Policing Plan, drawn up in consultation with the chief constable, which shows how the priorities of government and local people are to be delivered and, now, how 'Best Value' is to be pursued and achieved. The Authority and the police force are obliged to consult with the public on the Policing Plan, monitor progress as measured by performance indicators, and subsequently give an account of achievements in an Annual Report. It is through the Policing Plan that the Police Authority holds the chief constable to account for the service delivered. The Authority is also responsible for buildings and land used by the force and for running a Lay Visitor Scheme<sup>5</sup> through which appointed and trained volunteers make unannounced visits to police stations and check on conditions for those held in police cells. In addition, Police Authorities are

responsible for appointing and dismissing the chief constable and assistant chief constables – a key responsibility which serves to emphasise the importance of their role, particularly in a service where the style and actions of chief officers can have a profound influence and effect.

The Chair of the Police Authority normally devotes rather more than a day a week to the work of the Authority (one North East Authority reported that the Chair spent 500 hours a year, another 80 days a year). Other members devote about half that (one stated an average of 250 hours per year, the other 30 days per year). Members of Police Authorities are paid for their services at a Home Office rate of £17 per hour: Chairs receive up to a maximum of £11,250 a year and other members up to £7,500 a year. Members can also claim travel and subsistence expenses.

### **Accountability and openness**

Compared with some local public bodies, Police Authorities have relatively clear formal accountability, at least in relation to their role, and have structures and requirements which should render them open to scrutiny.

A Police Authority represents the local community and, on behalf of the community, holds the chief constable to account. An Authority is accountable to local people - not the Home Office, as might be assumed. But that accountability is difficult to enforce; the only democratically elected representatives are the councillor members and they are selected to serve on the Authority not by the electorate but by their fellow councillors. The public can, therefore, only actually remove councillor members by removing them as councillors at local council elections. A Police Authority has the power to remove one of its own members, though this power is rarely used.

Police Authorities have extensive obligations to consult their local communities on policing and priorities in relation to their Policing Plans and local crime and disorder audits and strategies. The recently-

introduced Best Value regime further emphasises and significantly extends the need to consult the public on the basis that 'local people should be the judge of the services they receive'. Linked to Best Value, the Home Office is now encouraging Police Authorities to consult more widely and effectively, and particularly to engage with hard to reach groups.<sup>6</sup> In the North East, Police Authorities report that they are using a range of methods, including Police Community Consultative Groups, forums, leaflets, surveys and focus groups.

Police Authorities are subject to the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. Their meetings are open to the public (with the exception of confidential business) and agendas and papers are available to the public from the clerk to the Police Authority (or, in the case of Durham, at the County Archivist's office). Police Authorities hold public Annual Meetings – though the usefulness of these seems to be limited; Durham Police Authority, for example, reports that no members of the public attended their last Annual Meeting, which was advertised only by notices at County Hall and at Police Headquarters. Cleveland also reported that no members of the public came to their last Annual Meeting. Police Authorities are obliged to publish a Policing Plan and Annual Report, both available on application to the clerk to the Authority. They also issue press releases and respond to media inquiries. The North East Police Authorities do not have their own websites, but both Cleveland and Northumbria police force websites provide reasonably helpful and informative material about their respective Police Authorities. The Durham police force website was 'under construction' for many months and currently simply has a map of police divisions, recruitment information and a copy of the Policing Plan.

Police Authorities maintain registers of members interests and these are available for public inspection through the clerk to the Authority, but this information is not included in any of the Annual Reports of North East Police Authorities. Members are obliged to declare interests and withdraw from discussions involving their pecuniary

interests; failure to comply to these rules constitutes a criminal offence.

Police Authorities are funded from a combination of sources: Home Office grant, central government grant, non-domestic rates and local council tax<sup>7</sup>. They then set the budget and allocate funding to the police force. They are subject to rigorous financial oversight as well as performance monitoring. As with local councillors, members of Police Authorities can be surcharged if the Authority fails to set a lawful budget and auditors consider that the Authority has suffered a financial loss as a consequence (though this is set to change under the Local Authority Bill currently going through Parliament).

The Audit Commission is responsible for the external audit of Police Authorities and appoints auditors to examine financial matters. As is the case with local councils, the public are entitled to inspect the Police Authority's accounts and supporting information for a period of 15 working days before the annual audit. The Audit Commission also collects information on performance and undertakes practice studies and reviews. Police forces are subject to annual inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, a body directly accountable to the Home Secretary, and in future the Inspectorate will have the power to inspect Police Authorities directly in respect of their duty to secure Best Value.

The Police Authority has disciplinary authority in relation to the chief constable and assistant chief constable and has a statutory duty to supervise police investigations of complaints about the conduct of officers. Complaints about the police can be handled by the police themselves or can be referred for investigation to the Police Complaints Authority. Complaints concerning the conduct of the Police Authority can be subject to investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman.

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of the reform of Police Authorities, their membership structure and appointment processes, see B. Loveday: 'Business as Usual? The New Police Authorities and the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act', *Local Government Studies*, 197, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 76-87.

<sup>2</sup> The Macpherson report on the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence recommended increased ethnic minority representation on Police Authorities. This issue was taken up by the Home Office and the Association of Police Authorities in the most recent round of appointments of independent members in 1999. Nationally, the number of *independent* ethnic minority members was increased from 8% to 14%, and altogether 6.6% of Police Authority members are now from ethnic minorities. But the Association of Police Authorities has cautioned that 'there are still too many Police Authorities around the country whose make-up does not fully represent the diversity of their local populations' (APA press release, 30.7.99).

<sup>3</sup> The nominating local authorities are County Councils, Unitary Councils and Metropolitan Borough Councils. Shire District Councils are, therefore, not included in the process.

<sup>4</sup> This section draws on *Roles, Responsibilities, Duties, Functions – a Guide for Police Authority Members*, Association of Police Authorities, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Lay Visitor Schemes were introduced following the Scarman Report on the Brixton riots in 1981.

<sup>6</sup> See guidance note, *Best Value – the Police Authority Role*, Home Office Police Resources Unit, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> See: *Pounding the beat: a guide to police finance in England and Wales*, Association of Police Authorities, 1999.

## ANNEX 9.1: POLICE AUTHORITIES IN THE NORTH EAST

There are three Police Authorities and police forces in the North East. Information of members is from the Authorities' responses to our survey, supplemented by details given in Annual Reports and on police force websites.

### **Cleveland Police Authority**

Police Headquarters, P O Box 70  
Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough TS8 9EH  
Tel: 01642 301446  
Website: [www.cleveland.police.uk](http://www.cleveland.police.uk)  
Area: former Cleveland County

#### **Councillors**

Ken Walker (Chair). Leader, Middlesbrough Borough Council. Retired branch secretary, TGWU  
Alan Clark. Stockton Borough Council (Conservative). Retired police officer.  
Christopher Coombs. Stockton Borough Council. Former primary head teacher. Self-employed educational consultant  
Maureen Goosey. Hartlepool Borough Council. Retired part-time lecturer  
Abdul Hamid. Middlesbrough Borough Council. Retired bus driver  
Ian Jeffrey. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. Retired Process supervisor in the chemical industry  
Kevin Kelly. Hartlepool Borough Council (Liberal Democrat). Lecturer in adult education  
Vera Moody. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.  
Kath Sainsbury. Stockton Borough Council. Special Needs Support Assistant in a primary school

#### **Magistrates**

Edward M Cox. Retired civil servant, DHSS.  
Russell Hart (Vice Chair). Accountant. Former Leader of Hartlepool Borough Council  
Alfred W Illingworth. Retired Chief Personnel Officer in the public sector.

### **Independent**

Pamela Andrews-Mawer. Retired civil servant, Employment Service  
David J Fewtrell. Retired company director  
Barrymore Foxton. Retired Technical Sales Manager in the chemical industry  
Kenneth Gardner. Self-employed personnel consultant  
Jean M Slater MBE. Volunteer organiser, Red Cross, Stockton. Retired civil servant. Non-executive member, North Tees NHS Trust

### **Northumbria Police Authority**

Civic Centre, Gateshead NE8 1HH  
Tel: 0191 477 1011  
Website: [www.northumbria.police.uk](http://www.northumbria.police.uk)  
Area: former Tyne & Wear County and Northumberland  
Budget (1999/2000): £213m

#### **Councillors**

George Gill CBE (Chair). Leader, Gateshead Borough Council  
David Napier. Gateshead Borough Council  
Linda Waggott. South Tyneside Borough Council. Personal Assistant to Stephen Hepburn MP  
Eddie Darke. North Tyneside Borough Council  
Tom Foster. Sunderland City Council  
Peter Laing. Newcastle City Council  
John Whiteman. Northumberland County Council  
Don Jowett. Northumberland County Council (Conservative)  
Diane Packham. Newcastle City Council (Liberal Democrat)

#### **Magistrates**

Anthony Atkinson  
David Brown  
Ian Gordon OBE



**Independent**

Robert Avery. MD, De la Rue.  
Angela Brunton. Catering student.  
Janet Guy. Solicitor.  
Dr Azhar Mahmood. Consultant  
haematologist.  
Susan Pearson. Chief Executive, Age  
Concern Newcastle.

Sunderland. Member, Seaham  
Town Council. Board member,  
East Durham Community College.  
Gordon R Sewell. Self-employed  
consultant – food hygiene and  
health and safety.

**Durham Police Authority**

County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL  
Tel: 0191 383 3491  
Website: [www.durham.police.uk](http://www.durham.police.uk)  
Area: County Durham, including  
Darlington

**Councillors**

Joe Knox (Chair) Durham County Council  
Alan Barker (Vice-Chair) Durham County  
Council. Part-time lecturer  
Derek Armstrong. Durham County  
Council (Independent)  
Jo H Fergus MBE. Durham County  
Council (Conservative)  
Richard Langham. Durham County  
Council. Also Wear Valley District  
Council  
Linda Anne Wright. Durham County  
Council  
Leonard O'Donnell. Durham County  
Council  
Don Robson CBE. Leader, Durham  
County Council  
Bill Dixon. Darlington Borough Council.  
Social Worker

**Magistrates**

John D Farquar  
Ean T Reed  
Peter J Thompson

**Independent**

Mariom F G Khan-Willis  
Eleanor W Lane. Director of Service  
Development, South Durham NHS  
Trust  
Christine A McEwan. Self-employed –  
management and business skills  
development and training  
Dr Edwin W Mason. Sole proprietor,  
Dalton Consultancy Service.  
Partner, Seaham Harbour Online.  
Visiting lecturer, University of

## 10. REGENERATION PARTNERSHIPS

Over the last 30 years, successive governments have pursued a range of policies aimed at regenerating disadvantaged and run-down areas. In the 1970s, selected local authorities were awarded government funding under the Urban Programme, specifically to support economic, social and environmental projects, mainly in the inner cities. Subsequently, in the 1980s, local authorities were sidelined and new quangos, Urban Development Corporations, were established to undertake large scale physical regeneration schemes; two UDCs were set up in the North East, in Tyne & Wear and Teesside, both of which were finally wound up in 1998. In the 1990s, policy shifted towards more comprehensive, 'holistic' regeneration programmes, undertaken by local partnerships encompassing the public and private sectors, the voluntary sector and local communities. This latest policy shift has produced a great many local partnership bodies delivering regeneration projects and initiatives – and has added another element to the governance of the North East.

The first of the new partnership-based programmes, City Challenge, commenced in 1992 and lasted until 1998. Each City Challenge partnership was awarded funding, on the basis of a competitive bid for resources, to carry out a specified regeneration programme comprising many individual projects. In the North East, there were six City Challenge schemes (in Newcastle, North Tyneside, Sunderland, Stockton, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough). The City Challenge approach was generally judged a success and has been continued through the Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund which has spawned numerous regeneration partnerships. Two years ago, the government added another programme, New Deal for Communities, which is beginning to produce yet more regeneration partnerships based on a strengthened commitment to community involvement and benefit. The New Deal for Communities programme forms the basis for the recently-announced National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal which will further

reinforce the development of local partnerships to deliver regeneration and tackle social exclusion.

*The Single Regeneration Budget.* Our focus here is upon the partnerships funded through the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) which constitutes the main component of current area-based regeneration activity. The SRB came into effect in April 1994 and involved the amalgamation of 20 pre-existing regeneration budgets from four government departments (Environment, Transport, Trade and Industry, and Employment). A key aim was to promote a co-ordinated approach to regeneration, and also to ensure a more holistic approach, embracing employment and economic development, environmental issues, housing improvement, community safety, the needs of minority ethnic communities and improvement of the overall quality of life.

Part of the SRB was earmarked for existing government regeneration schemes such as City Challenge and the Urban Development Corporations, but the rest – the SRB Challenge Fund – was available to be allocated to local partnerships which were invited to bid for these resources. As the older programmes wound down, an increasing proportion, now the majority, of SRB funding was allocated through the Challenge Fund.

Each year, partnerships in disadvantaged areas, rural as well as urban, can put forward bids for SRB funding by submitting their proposals for local regeneration programmes. Since 1994 there have been five annual bidding rounds for SRB funding. In the first four rounds, £3.4bn was allocated to over 600 schemes throughout the country. In the latest round, in 1999, a further £1bn was committed to 163 regeneration programmes, each of which lasts up to seven years.

In the North East, the five rounds of the SRB from 1995 to 1999 saw 94 successful bids, supported to the tune of some £520m over

the lifetime of their programmes. Some have been awarded large sums from the SRB, such as the £23m for the Newcastle North West Partnership and £17.8m for the South Bank Partnership on Teesside. Others are much smaller, for example the £2.3m awarded to the Confident in Prudhoe regeneration scheme in the third round of SRB.

The amount contributed directly from SRB is, however, just a part of the total value of these schemes. The rest comes from a variety of other public sources, from the private sector and from the EU. Thus, in the case of the Stanley Southern Partnership in County Durham, SRB is contributing £3m out of a total programme cost of £17.79m; £11.8m is to come from the private sector and the remainder from other public sector sources including local authorities, English Partnerships, Further Education Colleges, the National Lottery and EU Objective 2 funding.

Since its establishment in April 1999, the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast, has been responsible for managing the SRB; before that, it was the responsibility of Government Office – North East. Officials from One NorthEast offer advice and support to potential bidders and the agency decides which are to be funded, subject to final ratification by government ministers. Those partnerships which are successful have to produce a Delivery Plan which details projects and forecast outputs for the programme. This serves as a contract between the partnership, One NorthEast and, ultimately, the government. It allows officials to monitor performance and take action if outputs are not attained.

*Partnerships.* The SRB is about funding, the attainment of outputs and the achievement of outcomes which are of benefit to disadvantaged communities. But it is also about the process of delivering regeneration, by involving key stakeholders. An essential feature of the SRB is the development of local regeneration partnerships between the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. This usually results in the participation of a wide variety of interests, such as: local authorities; Training and

Enterprise Councils (TECs); health authorities and trusts; the police; education bodies; housing associations; private companies; chambers of commerce; enterprise agencies; the voluntary sector; community groups and local residents. This emphasis on partnership involves a move away from reliance on the contribution of individual agencies by bringing together a range of agencies and interests to steer, fund and implement regeneration programmes. Partnership working under the SRB regime involves new structures and processes of decision-making, in which a partnership board of individuals – from each of the agencies involved and the local community - oversees a small team of executive staff charged with delivering the regeneration programme. Since the SRB aims to ensure that partners decide what *local solutions* are needed to solve the problems of their localities, it is expected that the mix and balance of partnership composition will reflect both the characteristics of the local area and the content of the bid.

The government's SRB bidding guidance has encouraged innovative and flexible responses. While it is accepted that local authorities and TECs are likely to have a key role in leading and managing bids, this is not obligatory. Where appropriate, bids and subsequent programmes can be led by private, community or voluntary sector partners. There is also a concern to place communities at the heart of the regeneration process. The importance of 'bottom up' partnerships is reinforced with a commitment to arrangements that promote 'a balance of power and responsibility', rather than structures in which the predominant role of one agency – such as a local authority – reduces the sense of ownership felt by the voluntary sector and local communities.

### **The Structure of Regeneration Partnerships**

Given the emphasis on local and innovative solutions and the absence, until very recently, of government guidance on the nature and working of regeneration partnerships, there is considerable variation in the way programmes are managed,

partnerships are structured and local interests are represented. As a recent government guidance document points out:

‘In some cases, existing partnerships will put forward bids; in others new partnerships (or adaptations of existing ones) may be formed...partnerships may be set up as companies limited by guarantee or have informal structures. Bids may also be put forward or implemented by a formally constituted company set up for its own regeneration purposes.’<sup>1</sup>

This diversity, and the consequent difficulties inherent in trying to generalise about the nature of SRB partnerships, is clearly evident when we look at the management of SRB projects in the North East. We can initially illustrate this variation by looking at the differences in *geographical coverage* (or functional scope) of the SRB partnerships in the region.

One model is where a single ‘strategic’ multi-sector partnership oversees and co-ordinates a number of SRB programmes spread over several rounds. This partnership is a permanent organisation, often covering an entire local authority area, with a membership drawn from the key partners. An example is the South Tyneside Enterprise Partnership (STEP), which was set up in 1994 to promote the borough’s economic and social regeneration. The STEP Board oversees all of South Tyneside’s five SRB programmes, involving a total expenditure of £126m, of which £28m comes directly from SRB. The Board comprises six representatives from the private sector, two from the community sector, one from Tyneside TEC and two representatives from the local authority. A similar model is found on Teesside, where the Stockton Renaissance Board of 24 people is responsible for three SRB programmes in that borough. With its members largely drawn from other regeneration agencies, projects and partnerships, the Stockton

Renaissance can perhaps be viewed as a ‘partnership of partnerships’.

Another model is where a partnership oversees a regeneration programme in one geographical area. This focuses on a small community or locality, such as a housing estate or a disadvantaged area of a larger town or city, which often has already been the subject of previous interventions under City Challenge or earlier SRB rounds. For example, Reviving the Heart of the West End is an SRB programme covering a population of 9,000 people in the Benwell area of west Newcastle. The Board (called a ‘consortium’) is a partnership of community and residents organisations in Benwell; Newcastle City Council; the private sector; and the local Community College. One variant on this model is the North Tyneside Challenge Partnership Board where the body originally set up under the City Challenge initiative (as a company limited by guarantee) has been utilised as a successor organisation to deliver SRB programmes, in this case, an SRB round two programme to regenerate North Shields town centre.

A third model is a partnership managing a regeneration programme aiming to meet the needs of particular target groups rather than distinct geographical communities. In this sense, the target is ‘communities of interest’ rather than just those of ‘place’. Thus, Tyneside TEC manages the Effective Progression to the Labour Market programme which covers all of the TEC area (Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside) and which attempts to target recent school leavers who are not involved in education, training or employment six months after leaving school or college. The Board of 11 people includes three representatives from the TEC, four from local education authorities, and a representative from a Further Education College, from the Careers Service, the Training Provider Network and the YMCA.

SRB Partnerships also vary in terms of their *size and organisational complexity*. In the North East, our survey of partnership Boards found they had, on average, 17 members but there was wide variation. The smallest (the Middlesbrough Pride and Enterprise

partnership board) had only eight members, while the largest (Stanley Southern Regeneration Partnership) had 31. Some of the smaller partnerships have a relatively simple structure, typically a single partnership Board and a small number of supporting staff. At the other end of the scale, large SRB programmes tend to have more complex management structures which may include a large partnership forum, the main partnership Board, a number of sub-committees or sub-groups and an executive team. The City of Sunderland Partnership structure, for example, includes a 'strategic' partnership Board; a supporting officer group drawn from the partners; SRB Programme management responsibilities carried out by Sunderland City Council (the accountable body); and several sub-groups concerned with issues such as marketing and telematics.

In many cases, there is a main partnership Board and a small executive Board that has delegated powers. In the case of the Reviving the Heart scheme in Newcastle, for example, the full Board of 20 will meet quarterly, while the executive of eight meets each month. The main Board is responsible for policy and strategy, with the smaller executive Board responsible for administration, project appraisal and evaluation and monitoring.

The *decision-making role* of partnership Boards also varies. In some of the partnerships where an SRB programme has grown out of, and is subsequently managed by, an existing organisation (such as a local authority department or TEC), the full partnership may meet infrequently and have a largely supportive, overseeing, role in relation to the management of full-time local authority or TEC staff. Thus, the partnership Board may be less involved in operational issues, having responsibility for determining the strategy and hence delegating a considerable level of responsibility to the executive staff. In County Durham, the day-to-day management of two SRB projects (covering SRB rounds one and three) is undertaken by small management/executive teams comprising officers drawn from different Durham County Council departments and from the local TECs. In

turn, they report to the County Durham Regeneration Partnership, a county-wide forum that brings together 47 organisations and which is chaired by an Assistant Director from the County Council.

In other cases, where new partnership arrangements have been developed to encompass new ways of working and to involve and empower new interests (such as the community or voluntary sectors), the partnership Board is likely to have direct involvement in strategic and policy development and adopt a more hands-on approach to overseeing and monitoring the management of the programme. In some of the larger partnerships, where organisational structures are more complex and there is a separation between the full partnership and an executive Board (or delegated sub-committees), there may be a distinction between individual Board members in terms of the roles they play. Hence, some key partners may be at the heart of the decision-making process while others may be involved in a more limited way.

*Status of partnerships.* The majority (89%) of SRB partnerships in the region responding to our survey are informal, unincorporated bodies, with only a few (11%) of partnerships adopting a more formal incorporated status as a company limited by guarantee. 86% of the partnerships have decided to use their local authority as the accountable financial body. Only 14% have chosen other agencies; in three cases this involved TECs becoming accountable bodies, but in one case only, in Thornaby, did a community-based organisation assume the responsibility of being the accountable body. This situation no doubt partly reflects the government's requirements of accountable bodies and a reluctance to accept non-statutory or less formal organisations which may be difficult to hold to account.

While the majority of partnerships are unincorporated bodies, there are still differences in approach within this general category. Some of the more loosely-organised partnerships tend to rely on their main sponsoring organisations to commit individuals to the partnership while others

are developing a memorandum of agreement – specific to the particular partnership – which all individuals can sign-up to. Others, particularly the larger, ‘partnerships of partnerships’ are developing new, detailed and often wide-ranging terms of reference covering objectives, principles and practices.

*Strategy.* The Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast, established in 1999 is aiming for a more strategic approach to SRB and, allied to that, a new configuration of partnerships. The agency’s Regional Economic Strategy (see chapter 6) is to be delivered in conjunction with four sub-regional Development Partnerships (covering Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and Tees Valley). In the bidding process for the latest sixth round of SRB, these sub-regional partnerships are expected to endorse and support local bids for SRB funding and provide a strategic framework; this may also be supplemented by district-wide regeneration partnership frameworks. The local partnerships will continue to deliver regeneration programmes and projects but will operate in this context. This may give greater structure and coherence to regeneration activity – and will also result in new relationships between partnerships with differing degrees of power at different levels. It is to be hoped that these arrangements will not undermine local responsiveness and innovation.

### **Who runs the SRB Partnerships?**

We identified 43 established partnerships across the North East delivering regeneration programmes funded from the first four rounds of the SRB and still receiving SRB funding in 2000/01 (see Table 10.1). Of these, 28 (65%) responded to our survey and provided information about the composition of their Boards, their activities and processes of governance.

The 28 partnerships have altogether 436 Board members, of which 296 (68%) are men and 140 (32%) women. In only three partnerships are women in the majority; these are the Mill Lane Community Partnership in Stockton (19 women out of 28), the Teams Project in Gateshead (9 out of 16) and the Stanley Southern

Regeneration Partnership (16 out of 31). In two partnerships, Renaissance of Blyth and the Wansbeck Partnership, there are no women on the Boards. Just under 4% of Board members are from ethnic minorities, with only three partnerships having more than one person from an ethnic minority on the Board. A very small percentage of Board members (1%) are disabled; only four partnerships had members who were disabled. 33% of Board members are aged under 45, 58% are aged between 45-65 and 9% are over 65. The age profile is, therefore, considerably younger than for local councillors.

In terms of the sectors represented on the partnership Boards:

- 118 Board members (27%) are from the private sector. This includes representatives of Chambers of Commerce, Business in the Community, trade associations and individual companies, and also people from quasi-private sector organisations - the TECs and Housing Associations.
- 96 Board members, (22%), are drawn from local authorities. Of these, two-thirds are elected members and one-third council officers. Local councillors constituted 15% of all Board members. In a quarter of partnerships, four or more councillors are on the Board; the largest representation is six councillors (out of a total of 20 Board members) on one of the partnerships. There is some element of local authority representation on all the SRB partnerships covered in our survey.
- 89 Board members (21%) are local residents, including representatives from local community organisations.
- 81 Board members (18%) are from other public sector organisations, such as the police and other criminal justice agencies, the health service, schools, colleges and universities and GO-NE and One NorthEast. On two partnerships local MPs are members of the Board.

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Single Regeneration Budget Bidding*

*Guidance*, Ch. 5, section 5, 1998.

**Table 10.1: SRB Partnerships in the North East (Rounds 1-4)**

SRB Partnership	Forecast Expenditure £m's		Chairs of Partnership Boards
	Total	SRB	
Bensham & Saltwell (Gateshead)*	19.06	5.8	Councillor F Donovan
Blyth Valley - Brighter Future	5.3	1.7	Gary Owens (Blyth Council officer)
Centre of Manufacturing Excellence (EPICC)	10.3	1.3	Dr Bob Bew (Business, retd.)
City of Sunderland Partnership*	118	48	Frank Nicholson (Business)
Communities of Achievement (Middlesbrough)	6.7	2	Kate Brown (Education)
Confident in Prudhoe	7.8	2.3	Councillor Lorna Garrett
Consett Southern Regeneration Partnership*	14.6	2.3	Councillor Alex Watson
County Durham Partnership Bid for Young People*	5.8	3.9	Bob Ward (Durham C.C. officer)
Darlington - Skerne Park Estate	7.19	3.56	Alan Coultas (Business, retd.)
East Durham Villages Consortium	0.23	0.15	Jack Crammen (Business)
East Gateshead	34.8	18.6	Brian Cox (Gateshead MBC officer)
Effective Progression (Tyneside)*	7.3	4.3	T Crompton, Tyneside TEC
Grainger Town (Newcastle)*	117	11	Councillor Tony Flynn
Grove Hill 2000 (Middlesbrough)*	9.9	3.3	B McCallum (Voluntary sector)
Longbenton - Sense of Community (N.Tyneside)	60.5	17.9	Councillor Eddie Darke
Meadow Well Regeneration (N. Tyneside)*	37.9	15	Councillor R Usher
Middlesbrough Pride and Enterprise*	18	4.7	Councillor K Walker
Mill Lane Partnership (Stockton)*	4	1.9	Councillor D Coleman
Newcastle North West Partnership*	68	23	Councillor K Taylor
New Deal for Newcastle West	9.3	4.6	Councillor John O'Shea
North Hartlepool Partnership*	20.2	10.3	Councillor D Waller
North Tyneside Challenge*	29.8	10.7	Dr J Penny (Business)
Northumbria Community Safety	25.7	11.6	Councillor George Gill
Ouseburn Partnership (Newcastle)*	5.8	2.5	Rev Bob Langley (Voluntary sector)
Owton/Rossmere Partnership (Hartlepool)*	67	15.7	Councillor R Waller
Pathways to Work (N. Tyneside)	1	0.24	Councillor Mary Mulgrave
Ragworth Regeneration Partnership (Stockton)*	12.3	3.27	E Kennedy (Community)
Regeneration of Shields Road (Newcastle)	59	25	Councillor Kevan Jones
Regeneration Partnership for County Durham*	12.85	4	Bob Ward (Durham C.C. officer)
Renaissance of Blyth*	12.9	3.9	Mr S Cowell, Northumberland TEC
Reviving the Heart of the West End (Newcastle)*	43	15.9	Councillor John O'Shea
Safe in Teesside	12	4.6	Tony Gillham (Business, retd.)
Sherburn Road Regeneration (Durham)*	12.9	4.2	Linda Hall (Durham C.C. officer)
Sildon - Sustaining a Community	17.6	4.5	Councillor Brian Stephens
South Bank Partnership (Redcar & Cleveland)*	27	17.8	G Brownlee (Community)
South Bishop Auckland Regeneration Partnership*	7.02	2.8	M Elliot (Business)
South Tyneside Enterprise Partnership*	126	28	Dr Stan Jones (Business)
Stanley Southern Regeneration Partnership*	17.79	3	Councillor Lyn Boyd
Stockon Renaissance*	3.8	2.6	Councillor Bob Gibson
Teams Access (Gateshead)	1.9	1.3	Councillor Ian Mearns
Teams Partnership (Gateshead)*	2.7	1.3	Councillor Ian Mearns
Thornaby Regeneration Partnership (Stockton)*	7.7	2.8	P McGee (Voluntary sector)

Wansbeck Margins to Mainstream*	7.4	2.1	Councillor J Devon – J Tallock (Business) Joint Chairs
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*Notes:* Includes partnerships with funding from SRB rounds 1-4, with programmes ongoing in 2000. Expenditure figures are for the lifetime of the scheme(s) funded under SRB (up to seven years duration).

\* denotes Partnerships which responded to the questionnaire

*Sources:* Questionnaire survey of SRB partnerships, telephone survey and One NorthEast.



- 52 members (12%) of SRB partnership Boards are from the voluntary sector. This includes representatives from Councils for Voluntary Service and voluntary sector development organisations, local church and faith organisations, and sports organisations.

Some Boards have strong representation from the private sector (for example, North Tyneside Challenge). Others have particularly strong local authority representation, notably the Stanley and Consett partnerships in Derwentside, County Durham, and the Owton Rossmere Partnership in Hartlepool. Reviving the Heart of the West End, the Mill Lane and Ragworth Partnerships in Stockton and the South Bank Partnership in Middlesbrough have relatively high proportions of local residents on their Boards.

More than half of the Boards are chaired by people from local authorities, mostly local councillors (see Table 10.1). Of the full total of 43 partnerships, 22 are chaired by local councillors and a further five by council officers. Nine are chaired by business people or retired people with private sector backgrounds. Only three partnerships are chaired by individuals from the voluntary sector and only two chairs are local community representatives. Four of the five partnerships with community/voluntary sector chairs are in the Teesside area and only one in Tyneside (Ouseburn Partnership).

In many cases, partnership Boards were initially – and often hurriedly – put together by local authorities to support a bid for SRB resources. This process, together with a lack of government guidance on their composition, has produced considerable variation in the levels of representation of the different sectors and sometimes under-representation of key interests. However, there is nowadays more awareness of the need to achieve balanced representation and several Boards have, for instance, opted for a one third split between public, private and voluntary/community sectors so that no one group has an in-built majority.

Government guidance for the fifth round of the SRB has stressed the importance of developing the capacity of local communities to become involved in regeneration programmes and there is also an increased emphasis on organising the voluntary sector to enable it to become a more effective regeneration partner<sup>1</sup>. Guidance for the current (sixth) round of SRB is even more explicit about the importance of community involvement, including the need for capacity building and structures supporting community participation. In the regional section of the guidance, One NorthEast has said that SRB bids must include a ‘detailed Community Participation Plan’ and this will be a ‘critical factor’ in the assessment of bids. Community and voluntary sector involvement is expected to go well beyond rhetoric and result in real and meaningful engagement.

Most Board members are not appointed for a fixed period other than for the duration of the regeneration programme. Only in one partnership, Thornaby Regeneration, are Board members appointed for one year only in the first instance. In two partnerships, the Chair and Vice-Chair are subject to regular re-election by the Board. Only two partnerships responding to our survey said they advertise for Board members. The Mill Lane partnership and the Ragworth partnership (both in Stockton) use leaflets advertising the AGM and newsletters to encourage local people to put themselves forward as community representatives on the Board. In the main, however, recruitment is heavily dependent on SRB partnerships inviting nominations from key partners. This can produce a self-perpetuating clique of ‘usual suspects’, and this may prevent a widening of participation; it may also lead to confusion amongst local people about who is on the Board, and why.

The amount of time Board members spend working for their partnership depends upon their enthusiasm, interest and their other commitments, and also on how the partnership is organised and the frequency of meetings. Our survey found that, on average, Board members devoted 4.5 hours per month to the work of their partnership,

but this ranged from an hour a month on one board to 12 hours a month for members of three of the partnership boards. None of the partnerships offers remuneration to Board members over and above their expenses.

### **Openness and accountability**

The accountability of an SRB partnership can be viewed in different ways. In one sense, the partnerships are accountable 'upwards' via their contractual relationship with One NorthEast, DETR and the Secretary of State, who is ultimately accountable to Parliament. In terms of the Nolan Committee's emphasis on agencies 'being truly accountable only to those able to exercise sanctions over them', this relationship is important. If a partnership fails to deliver on the key outputs contained in its Delivery Plan, there are a number of sanctions available to One NorthEast and the DETR, including the issuing of warnings, withholding payments and even closing down regeneration programmes. While these sanctions are seen as very much a last resort – and officials responsible for monitoring would hope to detect at an early stage any problems with individual SRB programmes – such warnings have been issued from time to time to SRB partnerships in the North East.

Secondly, a partnership is accountable 'sideways' to the particular sectoral interests represented on the board. The importance of this type of accountability will be partly influenced by the formalisation of mechanisms – such as memoranda of agreement, standing orders or codes of conduct – which serve to inform partner organisations of the roles, responsibilities and opportunities for involvement of their representatives on the partnership. And, thirdly, a partnership is also accountable 'downwards' to the local community. One aspect of accountability to local people is via the representation of councillors on partnership Boards, often the relevant ward councillor. That accountability can, however, be somewhat unclear and confused since councillors will tend to be accountable primarily to the council committees which have nominated them and they have

difficulty 'reporting back' directly to their electorates. The accountability of local residents on partnership Boards to their local community can also be unclear, especially if they have not been elected – so they lack democratic legitimacy – and if there are no effective structures enabling local people to receive information from them and give their views to them<sup>2</sup>.

A useful way of assessing accountability 'downwards' is to compare 'democratic' practices in SRB partnerships to those statutorily required of local authorities under the 1985 Local Government (Access to Information) Act. The Act covers such practices as opening up council and committee meetings to the public, making available minutes and agendas of local authority committees and annually publishing accounts.

A national survey found that:

'SRB partnerships fall well short of the standards of transparency and accountability that would be expected of public service organisations ... in many cases members of the wider local community have inadequate levels of access to partnerships and their decision-making processes. Frequently partnerships fail to provide communities with both sufficient information regarding their activities and opportunities to influence those activities'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nationally, the number of successful bids led by the community or voluntary sector in SRB round five increased to 22, double the number in the previous round. These accounted for 13% of

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the successful bids in this round and came from seven of the nine English regions; neither the North East nor Yorkshire and Humberside had any bids accepted which were led by the community or voluntary sector.

<sup>2</sup> The regional guidance drawn up by One NorthEast for the sixth round of SRB recognises the difficulties of community representation: 'The mere existence of community representatives in partnerships is not enough to ensure a significant say in decisions. They need to play a full and effective role in the partnership and be supported by local structures that allow

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the community viewpoint to be heard and partnership decisions to be fed back to the community. Community representatives should hold themselves accountable to the community as well as advocating for it'. (*SRB Bidding Guidelines, Round 6*, One NorthEast, Dec 1999; para 1.4.4).

<sup>3</sup> *Competition, Partnership and Regeneration: Lessons from three rounds of the SRB Challenge Fund*, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, 1998, pp. 61-2.

**Table 10.2: Openness and accountability**

	<b>% of Partnerships</b>
Publication of papers for meetings	54
Newsletters	60
Publication of Annual Report	43
Code of conduct	46
Publicly accessible board meetings	46
Public register of members' interests	21
AGM open to the public	29
Publication of Delivery Plan	75

*Source:* Survey of SRB partnerships in the North East (28 respondents)

This assertion appears to be borne out by findings from our own survey. A substantial proportion of partnerships in the North East still do not provide a sufficiently wide range of relevant information on their activities (Table 10.2), nor allow opportunities to scrutinise their work, nor provide access to their decision-making processes, nor do they enable the local community to influence their work. Some SRB partnerships seem to have a passive approach, apparently little concerned about informing and involving local residents. But there is considerable variation in the practices of the different SRB partnerships in the North East regarding issues of openness and accountability ‘downwards’; some are well aware of the need to engage with local communities and make an effort to do so.

A quarter of the SRB partnerships in our survey are failing to implement any of the most basic practices associated with openness and accountability – such as publicly accessible Board meetings, publication of papers for meetings, an AGM open to the public and the publication of an annual report. In the main these tend to be partnerships in which local authority and business sector representation is strong and, conversely, in which community or voluntary sector representation is limited. Such partnerships can justifiably be described as ‘closed’ partnerships.

However, there are also examples of good practice and ‘open partnerships’ in the region. Just over a fifth (21%) of SRB partnerships responding to the survey have

adopted all of the key practices noted above. These include Reviving the Heart of the West End (Newcastle), Mill Lane Regeneration (Stockton) and the Thornaby partnership. On the basis of the evidence from the North East, there does seem to be a link between partnerships in which the community or voluntary sector has strong representation and the presence of mechanisms that contribute to openness and accountability.

There are other signs of emerging good practice:

- 39% of the surveyed partnerships have established community forums or other types of community working groups.
- 32% of partnerships have used surveys or focus groups to consult with their local communities.
- 19% of partnerships now have websites, which provide both information and an opportunity to express opinions.
- 18% of partnerships have their own information and resource centres.

But too many partnerships still remain detached from their local communities, failing to provide both information and opportunities for access and influence. Indeed, one of the partnerships that does not publish papers from its meetings commented that such documentation – not surprisingly perhaps – is ‘never requested by the public’.

## Conclusion

The need to reflect local conditions and interests will inevitably mean that SRB partnerships are characterised by diversity. However, there are areas in which a more codified and uniform approach would both greatly enhance the governance of SRB partnerships and allow them to be more effectively integrated into meaningful patterns of local representation. In the North East, as elsewhere, there is a need to foster and promote good practice in the development and implementation of regeneration programmes. In particular, efforts should be made to ensure that partnerships have a sufficiently inclusive representational base, that the composition of their Boards can be justified and that there are fair and effective forms of recruitment to Boards. It is also clear that there is a real need to promote much better practice in relation to openness and transparency.

As part of its review of regeneration programmes, the government has noted the value of developing an accreditation system through which partnerships would be deemed suitable agents for regeneration if they conformed to a series of benchmarks on management systems, financial soundness, consultation procedures and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. This type of approach has the potential to serve as a mechanism for regulating a – necessarily – diverse group of SRB partnerships, and such an accreditation procedure could also include clear standards concerning recruitment, openness and access to information, and on equity and balance in partnership representation. The recent report on the Public Administration Select Committee suggested that the DETR should make it a condition of funding agreements that local bodies in receipt of funds should be willing to appear before a scrutiny committee of the local authority to present an annual report. Moreover, such an approach – which links into the recent debate on modernising local government structures – could also be enhanced by increased local decentralisation, where the development of community or neighbourhood forums could act as complementary mechanisms of

accountability for locally-based SRB programmes. Such initiatives would go some way towards bolstering local democratic oversight of regeneration programmes – and are likely to make them more effective.

## 11. TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS (TECS)

The TECs were established ten years ago to manage the delivery of training schemes and initiatives and to promote local economic development. There are 72 TECs in England, of which five are in the North East. In 1999/2000, the North East TECs spent £127m, almost all of it taxpayers' money.

The core activity of TECs is managing the delivery of Government training schemes, principally Work Based Training for Young People, including Modern Apprenticeships, and Training for Work schemes. They also operate 'Investors in People' and 'Skills for Business' programmes which provide business training and development. TECs are involved in lifelong learning initiatives, have links with educational initiatives in schools and colleges and are partners on the Boards of local Careers Services. Their economic development activities are centred on the provision of advice and support to local businesses, mainly delivered through Business Links – 'one-stop shops' for support services which are closely connected to the TECs and in some cases are subsidiary organisations of the TECs. Almost all of their funding comes from the government, primarily from the Department for Education and Employment for the provision of training. TECs also receive funding from the Department of Trade and Industry to provide business support services and they obtain some funding from the European Union (mainly the European Social Fund) and from the government's Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund.

The TECs are not public sector organisations or appointed bodies: they are 'unique institutions in the British system of government, since they are private not-for-profit companies, limited by guarantee, who are funded by the taxpayer to deliver public services'<sup>1</sup>. They have contracts from the government to *manage* the delivery of services and they, in turn, subcontract to service providers such as colleges, voluntary sector organisations, private sector training companies and also employers. The TECs themselves are overseen by the government, which awards them a three year licence to

operate as contractors and specifies their expected attainments on the basis of performance indicators. As companies they can – and many of them do – make a surplus, or profit, from their activities and build up reserves; but this money cannot be distributed as a dividend and has to be spent on local training and enterprise development. TECs have to deliver what they are contracted to do, but beyond that have some freedom to spend on projects they decide upon and can use their surpluses to do this. Their freedom is, however, limited by the requirement that their Corporate Plans have to be agreed by the government.

Although they are private sector companies, the TECs are closely involved with the government and were originally developed as part of the Conservative privatisation programme. Before the TECs, the management of training programmes was the responsibility of public bodies: the Manpower Services Commission, with its Area Boards at the local level, and then its successor, the Training Agency. In the late 1980s, the Government decided to shift this responsibility to the private sector<sup>2</sup>. The Department of Employment invited local business groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, to develop proposals for the establishment of TECs. It was emphasised that these new organisations had to be *business-led* – indeed, *dominated* by business people and interests. A key requirement was that at least two-thirds of the directors on a TEC Board had to be from the upper echelons of the private sector. So the TEC Boards, while not appointed, have been very much *shaped* by the Government, most obviously in respect of this criterion of having a private sector majority. The underlying rationale was that local businesses know best and their needs are paramount; furthermore, it was considered axiomatic that business delivers more efficiently and effectively than the public sector.

The TECs have achieved much – some more than others – but the outcome of this experiment in privatisation has been rather

less than the promised 'skills revolution'. The present government has indicated a lack of enthusiasm for the TECs by implementing the New Deal programme through the Employment Service. And major changes are on the way: the government has announced plans to abolish the TECs in 2001, replacing them with new Learning and Skills Councils.

### **Who runs the TECs in the North East?**

Each TEC has a Board, comprising non-executive directors (including the Chair) and normally the TEC's Chief Executive. The typical non-executive member of a TEC Board in the North East is a white, middle-aged, able-bodied man. Most are senior businessmen (see Annex 11.1).

At the time of our survey, in mid-1999, there were 72 non-executive Board members on the region's five TECs, of whom only nine were female (in March 2000, there were 66 non-executives, and still nine women). According to the responses to the survey, there were no known disabled or ethnic minority Board members. Three-quarters of Board members were aged 45 to 65 (Table 11.1). Two of the TECs, County Durham and Sunderland, currently have only one woman on their Boards. Tyneside TEC – the only one which has a female Chief Executive – gets closest to a gender balance, with three female Board members out of a total of 15. All the five Board Chairs are businessmen.

The complete absence of ethnic minority representation on the North East TECs is striking – but only 6% of all TEC Board members nationally are from ethnic minority communities. There has been little change in the gender composition of the North East's TECs over the past five years: they now have nine female Board members, compared with seven in 1994.

As was originally stipulated by the Government and is specified under TEC Licencing Agreements, two-thirds of the Board members are senior people (almost all men) from business, mostly chief executives and managing directors and a few senior

partners in professional practices such as accountancy. The remaining one-third of Board members comprises senior people from the public sector, particularly from the local authorities and higher/further education, and also the voluntary sector. All the TECs have one or more local authority representative, most of them local authority officers. There are currently only two councillors – both of them on Tees Valley TEC. Only one TEC, Northumberland, has a Board member from a Health Authority. Three TECs – Tees Valley, Tyneside and Sunderland City – have people from the Trade Unions. Tyneside and Northumberland have members from organisations representing the voluntary sector and Sunderland TEC has an industrial chaplain.

It is obvious that, in terms of their composition, TEC Boards are *not* representative of the local populations that they serve. Half the workforce comprises women, yet only 14% of the Board members of North East TECs are women. Most TEC Board members are highly paid, middle aged businessmen, whose understanding of the needs and concerns of the local community is questionable. Bearing in mind that a major part of the TECs' operations is to manage the delivery of training programmes for unemployed people, it must be of concern that unemployed people are not directly represented on their Boards, nor are trainees. On the TEC Boards, the interests and perspectives of business are privileged over those of other local stakeholders.

### **Selection of Board members**

The North East's TECs advertise in the local press inviting people to apply to serve as Board members and their annual reports and websites also encourage applications. Three of the TECs (Tyneside, Northumberland and Tees Valley) maintain a register of applicants. Tyneside TEC operates an electoral college system, with Board members drawn from specified groups (two local authority, one regional TUC, one voluntary sector and one from education).

<sup>1</sup> C. Skelcher (1998) *The Appointed State*, Open University Press, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> The proposals for the development of TECs were set out in the Department of Employment's

White Paper, *Employment for the 1980s* (Cm 540), 1988.

**Table 11.1: Profile of non-executive members of North East TECs, 1999**

TECs	Total	Male	Female	Ethnic minority	Disabled	<45	45-65	>65
County Durham	15	14	1	0	0	2	12	1
Northumberland	9	8	1	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sunderland City	14	12	2	0	0	4	10	0
Tees Valley	19	17	2	0	0	4	14	1
Tyneside	15	12	3	0	N/A	3	11	1
Total	72	63	9	0	0	13	47	3

N/A: Not available/not stated

Source: Survey of North East TECs, 1999

**Table 11.2: Openness of North East TECs, 1999**

	County Durham	Northumberland	Sunderland City	Tees Valley	Tyneside
Publish Annual Reports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publish Corporate Plans	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hold Annual Public Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board meetings open to the public	X	X	X	X	X
Board agendas/papers available to public	X	✓	X	X	✓
Board minutes available to public	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public register of Board members' interests	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Survey of North East TECs, 1999



Both County Durham and Northumberland TECs have set up a Nominations Committee, a sub group of Board members, to recommend to the Board people who could be appointed as Board members. Some TECs particularly seek people from businesses which have participated in 'Investors in People' programmes, who would therefore already have significant contact with the TEC. In some cases – probably quite commonly – TEC Board members will approach people they consider suitable candidates for Board membership.

The region's TECs stress that they want their Board membership to reflect the make up of the local area and represent a range of interests and concerns. Some note that they particularly wish to appoint women and people from the ethnic minority communities. All TECs have a stated commitment to equal opportunities and would be expected to be well aware of these issues not just in relation to the labour market but also their own organisations. But the evidence indicates that they have had little success in broadening and strengthening their Boards. The fact is that, because TEC Board members have to be senior managers, at least two-thirds of them from the private sector, relatively few people are actually eligible. Moreover, those who are eligible reflect the profile of senior management which, especially in the North East, includes few women and few people from the ethnic minorities. Bias in company boardrooms is mirrored in the TECs.

Board members are appointed to serve a term of three or four years and can then be re-appointed for a second term; Tyneside and Tees Valley TECs will exceptionally consider re-appointment for a third term. There is a reasonably high turnover: only 27 of the 72 non executive directors on the region's TECs in 1999 were appointed more than five years previously. This may have much to do with the turnover of senior staff in business and also their difficulties in finding the time to serve on TECs. It suggests that the TECs may not be run by a 'self-perpetuating clique' of the same people; however, the TEC Boards may well comprise a succession of *similar* people,

with much the same backgrounds and interests.

### **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration**

TEC Board members have considerable powers and responsibilities. They are expected to determine strategy, ensure delivery of services, monitor and evaluate performance and ensure the financial viability and probity of the company. They are responsible for the business – although, of course, many decisions will actually be taken by TEC staff or effectively be determined by the government departments which contract services from them.

Board members are expected to attend most Board meetings and to sit on sub-committees. Chairs are usually expected to devote about a day a week to TEC business and other non-executive directors one or two days a month.

The conduct of TEC Board members is governed by principles set out in *Standards of Conduct for TEC Board Members*, published by the TEC National Council in 1998. Some TECs have also produced their own Codes of Conduct and, in response to our survey, some of them noted adherence to the Cadbury Code on Corporate Governance and commitment to the Nolan Committee's 'Seven Principles of Public Life'. Essentially, Board members are expected to act with integrity and impartiality. They must serve as impartial individuals and not use their position to gain advantage for their organisations or themselves. TECs have to maintain a register of Board members interests and those interests need to be declared by members when necessary.

Unlike the non-executive Board members of many of the quangos, TEC Board members do not receive any remuneration for their services to the TEC. They provide their time and expertise on a voluntary basis and receive only reimbursement of expenses. Under the Memorandum and Articles of Association adopted by TECs, the only director (Board member) who is paid for his or her services is the TEC's Chief Executive.

### Accountability and openness

As private businesses, TECs are not directly accountable to Parliament, but they are accountable to the government ministers and departments which award contracts for their services. Their operations are licenced by the government and most of their funding comes from contracts with the Department for Education and Employment and, to a lesser extent, the Department of Trade and Industry. On behalf of these Departments, the performance of TECs is monitored by civil servants in regional Government Offices (in this region, Government Office – North East)<sup>1</sup>. Information about the performance of each of the TECs is published by the government and is available on the Internet<sup>2</sup>.

Since their inception, TECs have been required to consult with local communities about their activities and future plans. Until recently, however, many TECs showed little enthusiasm for consultation. They consulted with at least part of the local business community and sent out a Corporate Plan to selected agencies for comment. They are required to publish an Annual Report and hold an Annual Public Meeting, but the usefulness and value of these methods of providing information and undertaking consultation has often proved to be very limited.

Over the last two or three years, the TECs have started to become more committed to local accountability and openness. In part, this stems from the work of the Nolan Committee, which looked specifically at TECs and which was followed by the publication of a revised *National Framework for the Local Accountability of TECs*, issued in October 1997. In addition, it reflects the change of government, anticipation of a Freedom of Information Act and, more generally, a political climate in which there is more opposition to secrecy. No doubt, the change in attitude of the TECs has also been a response to their concerns about their future.

The five TECs in the North East declare commitment to local accountability and openness. This is expressed in their Annual

Reports, is demonstrated by various new initiatives, and even by the fact that all responded to our questionnaire – some going into considerable detail about their efforts to provide information and be locally accountable.

As required by the government, all publish Annual Reports and Corporate Plans which are made available, free of charge, to the public (Table 11.2). Annual Reports are circulated to local businesses and organisations, in some cases sent to libraries and made available on TEC websites, and can be obtained on request from TEC offices. However, these Annual Reports vary in scope and the information they provide; and generally they are difficult for the outsider to understand, not least because of the use of jargon and reference to a confusing plethora of projects and initiatives. They present little quantitative data about TEC activities. It would be helpful if TECs would publish the government's league tables showing how they perform in respect of various criteria; none of the North East TECs include this, though some make reference to their high ratings. On the whole, it is not possible to judge the performance of the North East TECs on the basis of the information given in their Annual Reports.

There is apparently no set format for Annual Reports and it is therefore not surprising that they are uneven in quality and detail. Some give only summary financial accounts, while other provide full details. But none of them really explain, or justify, the surpluses (profits) which – controversially – the North East TECs have accrued. Interestingly, two of the TECs, Tees Valley and County Durham, include information about the larger contracts they have awarded to providers and name those Board members or staff having an involvement or interest in those providers. One of the TECs, Tyneside, gives the attendance records of individual members at Board meetings, thereby indicating their commitment.

The TECs are obliged to hold an Annual Public Meeting – similar to an AGM – to report on progress and respond to questions. These meetings are publicised in the press

and have attendances ranging from 100 to 400, mostly comprising people from businesses and local organisations. Some efforts have been made to increase attendance and Northumberland TEC has decided to hold four meetings in different locations across the County. In addition to the requirements of publishing an Annual Report, Corporate Plan and holding an Annual Public Meeting, the five North East TECs produce newsletters, leaflets and obtain coverage of their activities in the local media. Much of this information is aimed at businesses, but some is aimed at the public. Durham TEC, for example, publishes a supplement as part of a free newspaper which goes to all households, focusing primarily on training options available to individuals, supported by personal 'success stories'. All five TECs have also developed their own websites, which have become increasingly important as a source of information about what the TECs are and what they do.

It is still the case that *none* of the North East TECs allow the public to come to their Board meetings (see Table 11.2). But at least they now all make available the minutes of Board meetings on their websites; some deposit Board minutes in public libraries and they can be requested from TEC offices. Tyneside and Northumberland TECs also make available their Board agendas and papers. However, much of this material is, inevitably, in summary form, with little detail and many gaps since anything deemed confidential information has been removed. But this is a considerable improvement on the position five years ago, when none of them made their Board minutes or papers publicly available.

All five TECs maintain registers of the interests of Board members (and TEC employees). These registers are not published but all are available for consultation by the public, on request, at TEC offices. The registers include information about Board members' paid employment, appointments, directorships and equity interests over 10% and other interests (including those of close family) which may be relevant to the business of the TEC.

The TECs seek feedback about their services from their 'customers' – primarily local businesses. They have set up TEC membership schemes and clubs which can provide feedback, conduct customer satisfaction surveys, convene focus groups, forums and panels, and consult with local organisations, MPs and MEPs. They also have introduced formalised complaints procedures. In general, the TECs are keen to show that they have systems in place which foster quality improvement and a customer focus, demonstrating themselves the kind of approach that they encourage local businesses to pursue. The emphasis does seem, however, to be largely on ensuring businesses are satisfied; much less attention appears to be given to the views of trainees and other individual 'customers'. Of the five North East TECs, only Tyneside TEC has introduced a freephone helpline for trainees and a mentor to deal with training-related complaints and the concerns of young people.

The TEC's evidently have much more commitment to local accountability and openness than in the past. It is encouraging that they now declare a 'presumption in favour of disclosure', that they make more information available and seek feedback. Yet they remain anxious about openness and commercial confidentiality and still exclude the public from Board meetings. Their Boards are not representative of local communities, nor do they have democratic legitimacy. In short, the TECs act as private businesses – which is what they are – while having responsibility for the provision of services which are funded by the taxpayer.

### Future Developments

In April 2001, the TECs will be replaced by new Learning and Skills Councils, as proposed in the government's White Paper, *Learning to Succeed* (1999). There will be a National Learning and Skills Council (based in Coventry) together with 47 local 'arms' of the organisation, Local Learning and Skills Councils. Four of these Councils will be set up to cover the North East; Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and Tees

Valley will each have a Local Learning and Skills Council.

The aim is to bring together the range of learning and workforce development opportunities into a single coherent system. The Councils will oversee all post-16 education and training and are intended to bring a strategic focus to lifelong learning. The total budget will be around £6bn and they will be responsible for almost six million learners. They will take over the training activities current undertaken by TECs, incorporate and replace the Further Education Funding Council and also subsume some aspects of the work of Local Education Authorities. They will have responsibility for planning, funding and raising the quality of learning, and will work with a new inspection regime involving OFSTED and a new Adult Learning Inspectorate. It is also intended to develop collaborative arrangements between the Further Education sector and the universities (though universities remain outside the new system). The enterprise role of the TECs is to be passed to the Department of Trade and Industry's Small Business Service, which will award franchises to local service providers. Work-based training for adults, currently overseen by the TECs, will become the responsibility of the Employment Service and link more clearly with the New Deal programme.

The Local Learning and Skills Councils will be accountable to the National Council for the implementation of national policies, but will have significant decision-making authority and the flexibility to respond to local circumstances. The Local Councils are intended to be accountable to the local community for meeting local needs and are expected to consult with the public and local partners. Each Council will have a Chair and other non-executive members, appointed by the Secretary of State; these (unpaid) positions are being advertised and the appointment process will follow guidelines set by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The membership of these Councils is expected to embrace a range of experiences and interests, including individual learners, employers, trade unions, disadvantaged groups, education and

training providers and the voluntary sector. Each Council will also have a representative of the Regional Development Agency and the Council's plans will be scrutinised by the RDA to ensure consistency with the RDA's Regional Economic Strategy. The government has decided that 40% of the members appointed should have 'substantial recent business or commercial experience', and that the national Chair and the majority of local Chairs will be from business. There is a commitment to reflecting diversity and encouraging applications from women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and so on - the Learning and Skills Councils will certainly have greater diversity than the TEC Boards and be more representative of the community.

The introduction of the Learning and Skills Councils means fragmentation, dis-aggregating the functions carried out by the TECs, but also consolidation - bringing together post-16 education and training. The Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, claims that it will 'build a new framework around the needs of learners, rather than providers of education and training'. A big new quango, with local branches and altogether 800 appointees will soon be established<sup>3</sup>. The TECs - always anomalous bodies - will disappear; it is hoped the new structure will be more open and accountable - though it will still result in a democratic deficit.

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<sup>1</sup> The Nolan Committee recommended that each Government Office should produce an annual

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report on the TECs within its region. The first of these reports for the North East was published in January 1999: *Report on Training and Enterprise Councils in the North East 1997/98*, Government Office for the North East, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the TECs' performance is available on the Internet at [www.open.gov.uk/dfee/intertec](http://www.open.gov.uk/dfee/intertec). In addition, an independent Training Standards Council, set up

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in 1998, and a Training Inspectorate inspect and monitor the quality and effectiveness of TEC funded training provision; reports are available at [www.tsc.gov.uk](http://www.tsc.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> For updated information on the setting up of Learning and Skills Councils, see the Department for Education and Employment website: [www.dfee.gov.uk/post16/](http://www.dfee.gov.uk/post16/)

## **ANNEX 11.1: TECS IN THE NORTH EAST**

### **County Durham TEC**

Horndale Avenue,  
Aycliffe Industrial Park,  
Newton Aycliffe,  
Co Durham DL5 6XS  
Tel: 01325 372700  
Website: [www.cdtec.co.uk](http://www.cdtec.co.uk)  
Budget 1999/2000: £19.26m

### **Board members**

Mr Hugh Becker, Director of Geo A Carter Ltd (Teesdale Traditional Taverns), Barnard Castle  
Mr David Binks, Managing Director of Hathaway Roofing Ltd, Bishop Auckland  
Mr Richard Coitino, Deputy Managing Director, NSK Bearings Europe Ltd, Peterlee  
Mr Steve Dickinson, Managing Director, PC Henderson Ltd, Bowburn  
Mr Tom Edge CBE, Chairman, CAPITB Plc, Durham  
Mr Peter Gash, Manager-HRD, Quality & Administration, 3M United Kingdom PLC, Aycliffe  
Mr John Hamilton (Chair), Managing Director, Lamplas (Durham) Ltd  
Mr Graeme McClearie, Executive Director, East Durham Groundwork Trust  
Mr David McGregor, Divisional Organiser, RMT  
Mr Keith Mitchell, Director of Education, Durham County Council  
Mr John H Poland, Managing Director, MetroMail Ltd, Peterlee  
Mr Kingsley W Smith, Chief Executive, Durham County Council  
Ms Marilyn Tarn, Managing Director, Triple "T" Engineering, Shildon  
Mr Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, Durham TEC

### **Northumberland TEC**

2 Craster Court, Manor Walks,  
Cramlington, Northumberland  
NE23 6XX  
Tel: 01670 713 303  
Website: [www.ntec.co.uk](http://www.ntec.co.uk)  
Budget 1999/2000: £11.5m

### **Board members**

Mr J Thompson (Chair), Managing Director, Thompsons of Prudhoe Ltd  
Mrs J L M Axelby, Chief Executive, Northumberland Health Authority  
Dr Tony Birch, Process Owner/MSA for BASF plc  
Dr D Francis, Director, Community Council for Northumberland  
Mr G Robinson, Director, Tynedale Business Centre  
Mr M J Rudd, Managing Director, Hedley Purvis Ltd  
Dr Lindsey Davies, Director of Education, Northumberland County Council  
Mr Brian Lumsden, Senior Director of Operations-UK, Merck, Sharpe and Dohme.  
Mr Stephen Cowell, Chief Executive, Northumberland TEC Group  
Mr Neville Hall, Managing Director, Northumberland TEC Ltd

**Sunderland City TEC**

Business and Innovation Centre,  
Sunderland Enterprise Park,  
Wearfield, Sunderland SR5 2TA  
Tel: 0191 516 6000  
Website: [www.sunderlandtec.uk.com](http://www.sunderlandtec.uk.com)  
Budget 1999/2000: £18.0m

**Board members**

Mr John N Anderson CBE (Chair), Managing Director, Anderson Mercedes Benz,  
Sunderland  
Mr Martin Fenwick, Managing Director, Villa Soft Drinks Ltd, Washington  
Rev Canon Brian Hails, Industrial Chaplain  
Mr D Hodgson, Hodgson Maggiore  
Mr Hugh Morgan Williams, Managing Director, Canford Audio plc, Washington  
Mr Kenneth Parkinson, Managing Director, Newell Limited, Wear Glass Works, Sunderland  
Mr Arthur Scott, Regional TUC, Newcastle  
Mr Colin Sinclair, Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council  
Mrs Patricia Sinclair, Sinclair Hair and Beauty, Sunderland  
Mr I Todd, City of Sunderland College  
Mr Neils C Vinther, Managing Director, Grundfos, Sunderland  
Dr John Williams, Director of Education and Community Services, Sunderland City Council  
Mr Jules Preston, Managing Director, Sunderland City TEC

**Tees Valley TEC**

Training and Enterprise House,  
2 Queens Square, Middlesbrough,  
Cleveland TS2 1AA  
Tel: 01642 231 023  
Website: [www.teesvalleytec.co.uk](http://www.teesvalleytec.co.uk)  
Budget 1999/2000: £38.8m

**Board members**

Mr John D McDougall (Chair), Managing Director, W S Atkins Ltd, Middlesbrough  
Mr Les Bell (President), Chairman, Bells Stores Ltd, Skelton  
Mrs Pam Taylor (Deputy Chair), Tax Partner, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Middlesbrough  
Mr Alistair G Arkley, TWP 84 Ltd  
Mr Mike Bridger, Regional Industrial Organiser, Transport & General Workers Union,  
Middlesbrough  
Mr W Bates, NTL Teesside Ltd, Stockton  
Mr George Cooke, Special Projects, ICI Chemicals and Polymers  
Mr John E Foster, Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Borough Council  
Professor Derek Fraser, Vice Chancellor, University of Teesside, Middlesbrough  
Ms Sue Gaffney, Managing Director, Gaffney Gas & Welding Supplies Ltd, Middlesbrough  
Councillor Bob Gibson, Leader, Stockton on Tees Borough Council  
Mr Barry Keel, Chief Executive, Darlington Borough Council  
Mr Alaisdair MacConachie DL, Chief Executive, Sherwoods Ltd, Darlington  
Mr Paul McGee, Cleveland County Organiser, Workers Educational Association, Stockton  
Mr Gus Robinson MBE, Managing Director, Gus Robinson Development Ltd, Hartlepool  
Mr Peter Rowley, Director and Chief Executive, Darlington Building Society, Darlington  
Councillor Russell Hart, Former Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council  
Mr R Shotton, Chief Executive, Orchid Drinks

**Tyneside TEC**

Moorgate House,  
5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Business Park,  
Team Valley, Gateshead  
NE11 0HF  
Tel: 0191 491 6000  
Website: [www.tynesidetec.co.uk](http://www.tynesidetec.co.uk)  
Budget 1999/2000: £40.0m

**Board members**

Mr Ashley J G Winter (Chair), Managing Director, RH Patterson & Co Ltd, Newcastle  
Dr W Stan Jones OBE, Managing Director, VA Tech (UK) Ltd, Hebburn  
Mr Leslie Elton, Chief Executive, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council  
Mr Peter R Allan, Joint Senior Partner, Ward Hadaway, Newcastle  
Mr George Hanlon, Vice President & General Manager, Ingersoll-Dresser Pumps (UK) Ltd,  
Gateshead  
Mr Peter Haigh, Director of Corporate Services, South Tyneside Metropolitan  
Borough Council  
Mr Tony Harding, Managing Director, Northumbria Water Ltd, Pity Me, County Durham  
Mr Bob Howard, Regional Secretary, TUC, Newcastle  
Ms Carole Howells, Director, Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services  
Dr Ralph Iley CBE, International Syalons Newcastle Ltd, Wallsend  
Mr Chris de Lapuente, Managing Director, Procter & Gamble UK, Newcastle  
Mrs Lorna Moran, Chief Executive, Northern Recruitment, Newcastle  
Prof Gilbert Smith, Vice Chancellor, University of Northumbria at Newcastle  
Mrs Ruth Thompson, Manager, TRANSCO, Cramlington  
Mr Martin Nunn, Regional Director, John Mowlem & Co plc, Gateshead  
Mrs Olivia Grant, Chief Executive, Tyneside TEC



## 12. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Housing associations are not-for-profit organisations which exist to provide affordable housing for people in need. They are independent bodies controlled by voluntary committees or boards, although in the larger associations these committees of management will usually employ staff to carry out the day-to-day work of managing the association and its properties on their behalf. The majority of associations are registered Industrial and Provident Societies or Friendly Societies. Some are companies limited by guarantee. Many associations are also registered as charities. The fact that housing associations have been established and run through voluntary activity on the part of board members, as distinct from local authority landlords (which were established by statute), has led to their area of activity being defined as the *voluntary housing sector*. At the same time, their tenants have traditionally enjoyed almost the same level of security of tenure and rent control as local authority (public sector) tenants.

Housing associations are not public sector organisations, but they receive substantial public funding and are therefore subject to state regulation and audit. The Housing Corporation, a government quango established in 1964, makes grants of around £750m annually to the associations in England (they also raise similar amounts through private sector markets). To gain access to that public funding, associations have to register with the Housing Corporation which monitors and regulates their activities. The provisions of the 1996 Housing Act refined the registration and monitoring requirements faced by the associations and they became known as ‘registered social landlords’, but most still use the term ‘housing association’.

Housing associations have a long and complex history<sup>1</sup> as one of the two major providers of social housing, along with local authorities. The oldest association included in our survey in the North East is Durham Aged Mineworkers’ Homes which was established in 1898. Three of the

associations in our survey were set up in the inter-war years (Railway Housing Association, Newcastle & Whitley, and Home Group), although Home Group has undergone substantial changes since its inception in the 1930s. The establishment of the Housing Corporation led to a flurry of activity in the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s, and eight of the associations in the survey were established between 1963 and 1976. A few others reported formation dates during the 1990s, but each of these organisations (Home Housing Association, English Churches Housing Group and Three Rivers) was created following mergers or takeovers of existing organisations.

The growth of housing associations in recent years reflects major shifts in government policy, with a move towards the provision of social housing by this sector, rather than by local authorities. During the 1980s, the government encouraged new building by the associations through the provision of generous levels of Housing Association Grant, whilst reducing local authorities’ access to funds to develop new housing for rent. By the beginning of the 1990s, housing associations had become the sole providers of new social housing.

At the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, changes in legislation and funding were introduced to encourage housing associations to operate more like private sector organisations. This was done particularly through reducing the grants available to them for development. At the same time, further restrictions on public spending contributed to the ongoing physical deterioration of much of the stock of council housing. The response of many local authorities was to begin transferring their housing stock to existing or newly created associations in order to make it possible to access finance for maintenance and improvement through the Housing Corporation and from private sector sources. In the North East only one local authority, Tynedale District Council, has so far made such a transfer. But others are exploring the

possibility, chief among them Sunderland City Council which has applied to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions for permission to transfer its housing stock to a group of specially established local housing companies.

The housing associations operating within the North East are many and varied in terms of their size, ethos and operation. Some are based in the region and operate only in the region or in particular localities. Others are based elsewhere, some of them national organisations with housing stock throughout the country. The larger associations have thousands of properties, but there are many small associations with just a handful of properties.<sup>2</sup>

This study focuses on those associations which are most active in the North East and are responsible for the vast majority of housing association stock in the region. Altogether 20 associations engaged in a significant level of activity in the region were identified and asked to provide information; 16 of them gave sufficient information for analysis. The survey covered a range of types of association, with the largest group being those involved in the provision of houses and flats for people seen to be in need; this group controls the largest proportion of rented dwellings outside the local authority sector. In total, the 16 respondents included in the analysis controlled 38,561 dwellings in the North East (Table 12.1).

### **Who runs the housing associations?**

The 16 housing associations responding to the survey had a total of 213 board members. Almost three-quarters (74%) of these board members were men and three of the associations (Durham Aged Mineworkers, Cheviot and Home Group) had no women on their boards. Only one of the associations, Norcare, had more women than men on the board (9 men, 11 women). While more than half the tenants of housing associations are women, only 26% of their board members are women (Table 12.2).

Twelve of the associations gave information about the age of their board members. 22% were aged under 45, 47% aged between 45 and 65, and 31% over 65. This may be reasonably in line with the age distribution of tenants and is, in any case, a more balanced profile than for many public bodies in the region.

Only seven board members were from ethnic minority groups and two thirds of the associations surveyed had no ethnic minority board members. This is of concern since it may be more difficult for associations to respond to the needs of this section of the community without having such representation on their boards.

Many associations provide specifically for people with disabilities and they have policies which aim to ensure that the disabled are not disadvantaged in gaining access to their services. According to the Housing Corporation, approximately 6.2m people in the UK are disabled and a quarter of households has a disabled family member. Yet only three board members were reported to be disabled. With such a high proportion of the population having disabilities, this 1% board representation is so low as to mean that this section of the population is being largely excluded from the processes of governance in housing associations – organisations which have a key role to play in meeting their needs.

Board members of housing associations have a range of backgrounds or affiliations – but it generally is a narrow range. A large proportion were either current or, in many cases retired, middle class professionals, including a judge, senior officers from the armed forces, bank managers, various housing and construction professionals, management consultants, local government chief officers, journalists and academics. Like most public organisations in the North East, the housing associations are, in the main, run by white, middle class, able-bodied men, mostly middle aged or older.

<sup>1</sup> For a full and detailed description of the history and development of housing associations, see Cope, H., (1999), *Housing Associations: The Policy and Practice of Registered Social Landlords*, Macmillan.

<sup>2</sup> Information about the types and locations of all the registered associations is given in *Regulating the Sector: The Housing Corporation Regulation Report, 1998/99*. In 1999, there were 2,121 associations registered with the Housing Corporation in England, many of them operating on a very small scale.

**Table 12.1: Housing stock of main housing associations active in the North East**

Housing Association	Housing Stock	
	Total (national)	Of which in the North East
Durham Aged Mineworkers	1500	1500
Tees Valley	3397	3397
Norcare	120	120
North British	44592	5559
Endeavour	1350	1350
English Churches Housing Group	11000	600
Cheviot	2271	2271
Banks of the Wear	918	918
Newcastle & Whitley	700	700
Enterprise 5	1750	1750
Hanover	14826	345
Home Group	25794	13723
(Home Housing Association)	(22224)	(13657)
Three Rivers	2188	2188
Housing 21	12500	3500
Railway	1305	640
<b>Total</b>	<b>124211</b>	<b>38561</b>

*Source:* Questionnaire survey of the main housing associations active in the North East (excludes non-respondents).

*Note:* Home HA totals included in the figures for Home Group. These properties are legally owned by Home Group, a separate organisation from Home HA which acts as a managing agent.

Table 12.2: Characteristics of board members of housing associations in the North East

Housing Association	Gender		Disabled	Ethnic Minority	Under-45	Age	
	Male	Female				45-65	65+
Durham Aged Mineworkers	19	0	0	0	2	11	6
Tees Valley	8	3	0	0	0	6	5
Norcare	9	11	0	1	4	10	6
North British	10	4	0	2	2	7	5
Endeavour	9	7	1	0	N/a	N/a	N/a
English Churches Housing Group	4	2	1	0	1	0	5
Cheviot	11	0	0	0	0	3	8
Banks of the Wear	8	5	0	1	8	5	0
Newcastle & Whitley	8	2	0	0	3	4	3
Enterprise 5	7	2	N/a	2	3	4	2
Hanover	5	3	0	0	2	3	3
Home Group	7	0	0	0	0	5	2
Home Housing Association	17	9	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Three Rivers	10	3	1	1	N/a	N/a	N/a
Housing 21	10	5	0	0	6	7	2
Railway	12	3	0	0	N/a	N/a	N/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>47</b>

*Source:* Questionnaire survey of the main housing associations active in the North East (no response from Habinteg HA, ‘Johnnie’ Johnson Housing Trust, Anchor Trust, Guinness Trust).

The most powerful board member will usually be the Chair and he or she can have a substantial influence on the ethos and policies of the association. Among those housing associations surveyed, five of the Chairs were from public sector housing professional backgrounds, four from other public sector professional backgrounds, one a trade unionist, one a retired banker, one a retired air vice-marshal, one a private sector home care director and the others active in voluntary sector activity (see Annex 12.1). Only five of the associations had a female Chair and none had a tenant representative serving in this role.

#### Selection of Board members

**The rules for selection of board members vary and depend on the constitution, or the articles or memorandum of association. The National Housing Federation (NHF) – essentially a trade body for housing associations – has published model rules, which take account of the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Nolan Committee) and an earlier NHF funded inquiry into housing association governance.<sup>1</sup>**

**All of the respondent associations follow the NHF model rules by voting for board members at AGMs, with most associations electing all of their members in this manner. The elected Board then votes to elect the Chair and other officers. Voting rights at AGMs tend to be in the hands of those who are members of the association, with membership open to anyone who buys a £1 share. Despite Nolan Committee recommendations that housing associations should be encouraging new schemes to widen membership as a way of increasing accountability, access to information on becoming an association member varies between organisations. Some are only prepared to provide details in response to direct application to them, whilst others appear far more open and pro-active in encouraging broad based membership. Good examples include North British Housing Association, which states in its publications that:**

**‘NBHA particularly welcomes applications from those who can assist in the delivery of its Equal Opportunities Policy. It has set targets for increasing the number of black people, disabled people, women and tenants who are members of the Association.’<sup>2</sup>**

**Those associations whose activities are based entirely in the region tend to recruit all of their board members from within the North East. The nationally operating associations tend to have board members from a wider geographical spread.**

**One example of good practice is English Churches Housing Group, which operates nationally, but has a structure of regional committees involving local people in the governance of its activities within their region. ECHG advertises through the press for members for its board and its area committees for each region, and is currently restructuring its board to deal with a perceived ethnic imbalance.**

**Most of the associations which responded to the survey carry out some kind of skills audit of board members (some more formally than others), and seek to encourage new members who can bring missing skills to the organisation. Housing 21 specifically seek a quota of board members who are either: tenants; have financial/accounting skills; housing/building experience; or social services backgrounds. Similarly, Tees Valley Housing Association advertise that board membership is ‘by way of invitation or application from those who can meet the following criteria:**

- **Commitment to the aims and objectives of ...[the]... association,**
- **The potential to become a board member, and**
- **Skills complementary to maintain a balance alongside the skills of existing board members.’**

**Clearly associations are having to balance the Nolan requirements of increasing accountability, particularly to their**

tenants, with a desire to recruit board members with ‘complementary skills’.

Where ‘headhunting’ is taking place, associations emphasise that those being encouraged to seek nomination to the board are subject to the same open election process as all other candidates. But the limited way in which some associations advertise membership suggests that those being ‘headhunted’ are in some cases receiving more detailed information and encouragement on board membership than the ‘average’ potential member.

Most of the associations have places for at least one tenant on the board, but it is often unclear how these representatives are selected or whether mechanisms exist for feedback to other tenants. A small number are selected from tenants’ groups or panels, which in themselves can be unrepresentative of the whole tenant population. However, the dilemma over how to motivate tenants to participate, and how to ensure that those who do are representing the whole group and not merely a faction is one with which social housing providers have long grappled, with limited success. A number of associations expressed the view that the tenant board member was not intended as a *tenant representative* – this role being fulfilled by other forums including tenants’ panels or residents’ groups. Instead, the role of the tenant board member was perceived as giving a *tenants’ perspective* to the board – a member of the board who happened to be a tenant, bringing their experience in the same way as a member from any of the professions would bring their own distinctive perspective.

Associations which were originally established to meet the needs of current or retired workers in a particular industry retain strong links with those industries in the selection of board members. For example, the Chair and three non-executive members of the board of Railway Housing Association are nominated by the British Railways Board. The remaining 13 members of the board are selected on the basis that six must be

existing or former rail employees, with five who are not. The Durham Aged Mineworkers’ Homes Association has traditionally had six of its 19 board seats occupied by life trustees, with a further seven places occupied by trade union nominees. Of the remaining six, three were elected by the Annual General Meeting and three co-opted by the Board. At the time of the research this association was examining proposals for all places on the board apart from the six life trustees to be subject to a vote by the AGM.

Roles, responsibilities and remuneration

Housing association board members have a range of responsibilities for ensuring the proper conduct of the organisation’s business, through their own actions and by monitoring the activities of the staff of the association. In return for the access to public funds conferred by ‘registered social landlord’ status they are subject to government regulation through the Housing Corporation. The Corporation carries out a regular monitoring process examining the performance of each association. If an association’s board has failed to meet set standards the Corporation has powers under the Housing Act 1996 to make statutory appointments to their governing bodies. This direct intervention would usually be carried out to correct any serious failures or potential financial difficulties. During 1998/99 the Corporation made appointments to four associations, three of which operate in the Midlands or the South East, and one – English Churches Housing Group – which is a national association and is active in the North East.

None of the board members of housing associations receive remuneration. The amount of time each devotes to the work of the organisation varies considerably. Some Chairs of the associations responding to the survey work between 2-3 days per month, and one Chair works three days per week. Other board members tend to devote the equivalent of one to three days per month.

Those associations which are members of the National Housing Federation (including all of the associations included in the survey) are expected to follow the NHF standard Code of Conduct.<sup>3</sup> The Code includes recommendations on committee structures, the conduct of members and staff, and housing management practices. One key element of the Code is the requirement that staff and board members should not be involved in decision making in relation to issues about which they have a vested interest. The associations in the survey had adopted the NHF standard Code or had slight variations which covered the same issues.

Future developments in this regard include a proposed new code of ethics, announced by the Housing Corporation in February 2000, to encourage further improvements in associations' performance and accountability.<sup>4</sup>

#### Accountability and openness

Associations are independent organisations, differing from any private landlord or development company mainly to the extent that they must operate on a non-profit basis. Surpluses can be made but they must be used to further fund the core activity of the association – that is, the provision of accommodation - and cannot be paid to shareholders as dividends. They are required to make a range of information on their activities and performance available to the Housing Corporation, including details on governance, development and stock management.

Recent government policy to extend the local government 'Best Value' regime to cover housing association activity is likely to increase regulation and has resulted in a range of responses, with some associations implementing new policies and procedures more quickly than others. The Housing Corporation's Best Value objectives are:

- 'to strengthen the influence of residents over the design and delivery of the services they receive
- to deliver high quality and cost effective services
- to achieve continuous improvement in the services delivered to residents and others.'<sup>5</sup>

The process of strengthening the influence of residents could certainly be aided through more representation for this group on the boards of the housing associations of which they are tenants. Most associations do inform and consult with tenants, using such mechanisms as meetings, tenants associations and panels, newsletters and questionnaire surveys.<sup>6</sup> Newcastle and Whitley Housing Trust, for example, commissions an annual satisfaction survey of tenants and English Churches Housing Group surveys a different 1% of their tenants each month. These approaches are important, necessary and valuable, but direct involvement with the governance of the association is very desirable in order to ensure that tenants have a real say. A key element supporting that must be good access to information about the association and its governance.

All of the associations surveyed publish an annual report, which contains financial and management information (Table 12.3). The range of detail on governance in these reports varies. Some – for example, North British Housing Association – give photographs and detailed information on the age, background, and interests of board members. Others have no mention of the board other than the Chair's name at the end of a foreword to the document.

Only two of the responding associations publish their Corporate Plans. Interviews with board members of those who do not publish these plans revealed that they are concerned about the implications of making plans public when other associations working in the same locality will be bidding for funds from the same Housing Corporation budgets.

**Less than half of the associations hold Annual Meetings open to the public. The others hold meetings open only to shareholders, although some have invited tenants to recent AGMs. Only three of the associations open their board meetings to the public, and only five will provide papers from these meetings to the public. Again, concerns about the availability of information to competitor organisations appear to be operating in this regard.**

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<sup>1</sup> NFHA (1995) *Competence and Accountability: The Report of the inquiry into Housing Association governance*, National Federation of Housing Associations. (Following the introduction of Registered Social Landlords in the Housing Act 1996, the National Federation of Housing Associations was relaunched as the National Housing Federation).

<sup>2</sup> Quote from the NBHA website ([www.nbha.org.uk](http://www.nbha.org.uk)). This particular quote can be found on the page relating to Corporate Governance.

<sup>3</sup> National Housing Federation (1999) *Code of Conduct for RSLs*.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Hetherington, Crackdown on Housing Associations, *Guardian* 11 February 2000; Housing Corporation (2000) *Year 2000 Finance, Management and Policy Review*.

<sup>5</sup> Housing Corporation (1999) *Best Value for Registered Social Landlords*.

<sup>6</sup> The NHF has produced a good practice guide on mechanisms for ensuring the accountability of housing associations, which identifies techniques for informing and consulting with tenants. See: Ashby, J., Duncan, P. and Underwood, S. (1997) *Action for accountability: a guide for independent social landlords*, National Housing Federation.



**Table 12.3: Availability of information regarding activities of housing associations in the North East**

	Durham Aged Mineworkers	Tees Valley	Norcare	North British	Endeavour	English Churches Housing Group	Cheviot	Banks of the Wear	Newcastle & Whitley	Enterprise 5	Hanover	Home Group	Home Housing Association	Three Rivers	Housing 21	Railway
Publish annual reports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publish corporate plans	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x
Hold annual public meetings	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x
Board meetings open to the public	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Board agendas/papers available to the public	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x
Public register of board members interests	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Website	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x

but a request would be considered

*Source:* Questionnaire survey of the main housing associations active in the North East.

**Table 12.4: Information available on housing associations' websites**

	Norcare	North British	English Churches Housing Group	Banks of the Wear	Hanover	'Johnnie' Johnson Housing Trust	Bradford & Northern Housing Association	Anchor Trust
Names of board members	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x
Interests of board members	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
Selection criteria for board members	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x
Corporate structure	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x
Financial accounting information	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓
Performance statistics	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Contact details	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: analysis of websites, January 2000

All but three of the associations maintain a register of members' interests to which the public can gain access on request. The others have lodged this information with the Housing Corporation to whom they would refer any enquiries.

Only five of the 16 associations responding to the survey have websites (Norcare, North British, ECHG, Banks of the Wear, and Hanover), although most of the others say they are either developing them or exploring the possibility of going online. Some of the other associations operating in the area also have websites ('Johnnie' Johnson, Bradford & Northern, and Anchor Trust). Most are virtual on-line versions of their annual reports, with additional customer service information (Table 12.4). One of the sites (North British Housing Association) is particularly well developed, containing a range of useful information on the organisation, including detail on the board members, their backgrounds, interests, and ages. It also includes details on the role of the board, committee structures, shareholding membership of the association, and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

"Johnnie" Johnson Housing Trust is further developing a site which already combines detail of the organisation's services with extensive information on governance, including the structure of the board, standing orders, detail on how members can be appointed and the Code of Conduct for board members. Some of the others are clearly earlier in the development stage; some provide a range of information on the performance of the association, while others use their website solely as a marketing tool, with some details about their services.

### Conclusions

Housing associations have structures which reflect private sector organisation and business practices, but they are receiving substantial public funds and therefore need to be accountable. They are accountable to the Housing

Corporation but there is a need for them also to be accountable to their tenants.

In the North East, women, the disabled and members of ethnic minority groups are under-represented on boards of housing associations. The profile of the typical board member is a white, able-bodied, man of middle age or older, who is engaged in, or retired from a middle class profession. Consequently, there is limited representation of some of the groups which housing associations exist to serve.

Selection of new board members is open to direct application, and invitations are extended to those who are viewed as having professional skills which would benefit the organisation. Increasing pressure on associations to increase the influence of tenants has resulted in some positive statements of intent - but not yet in widespread and substantial changes in the actual membership of boards.

All of the associations have codes of guidance for the conduct of board members and the activities of the association, and these are available to the public. All make annual reports and financial balance sheets available, but most restrict access to board meetings and to their corporate plans, reflecting their concerns about the value of information to competitor organisations. Many associations have yet to develop policies and practices which would render them open and properly accountable to their tenants and to the public.

## ANNEX 12.1: MAIN HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ACTIVE IN THE NORTH EAST

### **Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association\***

P.O. Box 31, The Grove  
Front Street  
Chester le Street  
County Durham DH3 3YH  
0191 388 1111

Chair: J. Whitworth  
Affiliation/Sector: Trade Union

### **Housing 21\***

c/o The Triangle  
Baring Road  
Beaconsfield  
Bucks HP9 2NA  
01494 685200

Chair: Michael Corp  
Affiliation/Sector: Public Sector Chief Executive

### **North British Housing Association\***

4 The Pavilions  
Portway  
Preston PR2 2YB  
01772 897200  
Website: [www.nbha.co.uk](http://www.nbha.co.uk)

Chair: Sebert Cox OBE  
Affiliation/Sector: Home Office Advisor and Assistant Chief Probation Officer, Inner London Probation Service.

### **Norcare Ltd\***

Third Floor  
Portman House  
Portland Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1AQ  
0191 261 2228  
Website: [www.ndirect.co.uk/~norcare](http://www.ndirect.co.uk/~norcare)

Chair: R. P. Gordon  
Affiliation/Sector: Retired banker

### **Enterprise 5 Housing Association\***

63 Little Bedford Street  
North Shields  
Tyne & Wear NE26 6NA  
0191 258 4121

Chair: Richard Greenwell  
Affiliation/Sector: Director, Regency Care Homes

### **Endeavour Housing Association\***

1 Grange Road  
Middlesbrough  
TS1 5BA  
01642 241391

Chair: Sally Craven  
Affiliation/Sector: Lecturer in Computer Studies

### **Banks of the Wear Ltd.\***

Morth Sands Business Centre  
Liberty Way  
Sunderland SR6 OQA  
0191 567 9856  
Website: [www.banks-of-the-wear.co.uk](http://www.banks-of-the-wear.co.uk)

Chair: Susan Jeffrey  
Affiliation/Sector: Northern Consortium of Housing Authorities

### **Cheviot Housing Association\***

Kingston Park  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE3 2EF  
0191 238 3900

Chair: John Burt  
Affiliation/Sector: Retired headteacher

**Tees Valley Housing Association\***

Rivers House  
63 North Ormesby Road  
Middlesbrough TS4 2AF  
01642 261100

Chair: Stephen Merckx  
Affiliation/Sector: not known

**Railway Housing Association\***

Bank Top House  
Garbutt Square  
Neasham Road  
Darlington DL1 4DR  
01325 482125

Chair: D. Harrison  
Affiliation/Sector: Retired Financial Staff  
Adviser to British Railways Board

**Newcastle & Whitley Housing Trust\***

1 Osborne Terrace  
Jesmond  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE2 1NE  
0191 239 0600

Chair: M G Brown  
Affiliation/Sector: Public Sector/Housing  
Association

**Home Group Ltd.\***

Ridley House  
Regent Centre  
Gosforth  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3JE  
0191 285 0311

Chair: Alexander Freeland Cairns Hunter  
Affiliation/Sector: Retired Air Vice-  
Marshall

**Hanover Housing Association\***

Hanover House  
1 Bridge Close  
Staines  
01784 446023  
Website: [www.hanover.org.uk](http://www.hanover.org.uk)

Chair: Anthony Marrington  
Affiliation/Sector: not known

**Home Housing Association 1998 Ltd.\***

Ridley House  
Regent Centre  
Gosforth  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3JE  
0191 285 0311

Chair: Brian Wilson  
Affiliation/Sector: Retired Political  
Organiser

**Three Rivers Housing Association\***

Hallgarth House  
77 Hallgarth Street  
Durham  
DH1 3AY  
0191 384 1122

Chair: Claire Hepworth OBE

**English Churches Housing Group\***

20 Portland Terrace  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE2 1QQ  
0191 240 2622  
Website: [www.echg.org.uk](http://www.echg.org.uk)

Chair: Ann Meakin  
Affiliation/Sector: Voluntary member

**Anchor Trust**

Oxford Spires Business Park  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1NZ  
01865 854000  
Website: [www.anchor.org.uk](http://www.anchor.org.uk)

Chair: David Peryer  
Affiliation/Sector: not known

**Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust**

16 Telford Court  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2DB  
01670 503203  
Website: [www.smart.co.uk/JJHT](http://www.smart.co.uk/JJHT)

Chair: David D'Arcy  
Affiliation/Sector: not known

**Guinness Trust**

West 3 Asama Court  
Amethyst Road  
Newcastle Business Park  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7YD  
0191 273 6233

Chair: The Marchioness of Douro  
Affiliation/Sector: not known

\* associations responding to the survey.

## 13. ARTS AND CULTURE

### Northern Arts

Northern Arts is one of the ten Regional Arts Boards in England with responsibility for the promotion and development of the arts at regional level. Each is an autonomous body with charitable status and receives funding from a variety of sources, but principally from the Arts Council of England.

At the national level, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has responsibility for the arts sector and provides financial support to the Arts Council of England and also to the Crafts Council, the British Film Institute and national galleries and museums. The Arts Council of England, a quango with a Board appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Chris Smith), oversees the work of the Regional Arts Boards and helps to fund them.

Northern Arts, established 40 years ago, is one of the oldest 'regional' bodies in the North of England and still covers the old 'Northern Region', comprising the North East and Cumbria. It was set up by the local authorities within the North and the company (a company limited by guarantee) is still owned by the local authorities. It began as a modest organisation, initially concerned with co-ordinating funding for the Northern Sinfonia and providing arts administration for the local authorities. Subsequently, Northern Arts became a part of the regional structure linked to the Arts Council, and has steadily grown and developed. It now has a budget of over £10 million a year and around 45 staff. Over 80% of its income is provided by the Arts Council. Subscriptions from the region's local authorities account for 7% of income and the rest is made up of funding from the British Film Institute, the Crafts Council and income from a variety of other sources.

The central aim of Northern Arts is to promote the arts in the region, with emphasis on widening participation. It has a commitment to promoting excellence in production and distribution and to creating a

vibrant and sustainable cultural sector, contributing to the economy, as well as to the quality of life. To achieve this, Northern Arts works with artists and agencies which promote, develop and support arts activities.

Northern Arts has six departmental teams focusing on different functions or arts media. These are: Regional Development; Performing Arts; Film, Media and Literature; Visual Arts; Finance and Resources; and Lottery and Communications.

The Regional Development team supports Local Arts Development Agencies (LADAs) and also Arts in Education Agencies. The majority of funding is devolved to the LADAs, which receive funding based on the size of population they serve. Northern Arts' funding is usually earmarked for programmes of activities rather than to meet infrastructural costs. LADAs vary considerably in size and format and may comprise a local trust, the local authority or an Arts Centre. Northern Arts seeks to encourage local diversity and each LADA has considerable freedom to draw up its own programme of activities.

The remit of the Performing Arts team includes dance, drama and music and it supports, for example, Dance City, Northern Stage, Northern Sinfonia and the Live Theatre Company. The Film, Media and Literature team covers film production, broadcast media, literature and publishing, education and training and the development of venues. Clients include Bloodaxe Books, New Writing North and Tyneside Cinema. Among the responsibilities of the Visual Arts team are visual arts and crafts, public art and sculpture, galleries, architecture and photography.

Northern Arts is probably best known as a provider of grants, but the organisation also has an important role in offering information and advice services. The Finance and Resources team provides advice on business planning, accounting and financial

management, IT and charity law. Northern Arts also advises on European funding, the government's New Deal initiative and sources of funding for the arts. In addition, it communicates information about government and Arts Council policies and actions to the region and, in turn, briefs MPs and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on issues in the region.

Altogether 28% of proceeds from the National Lottery is allocated to six 'good causes' – the arts, heritage, sport, charities, projects to celebrate the Millennium and the New Opportunities Fund. The Arts Council has responsibility for allocating the funding to the arts – amounting to more than £1bn by the end of 1999. Northern Arts and the other Regional Arts Boards oversee these awards and specify regional priorities, linked to notional budget allocations, alongside the national criteria. In addition to this, Northern Arts manages a part-delegated Lottery awards scheme and advises on large scale Arts Lottery grants and Millennium Festival awards.

### **Who runs Northern Arts?**

Northern Arts is owned by the region's local authorities; at the AGM the local authorities agree the accounts and could make changes to the constitution. In a formal sense, therefore, the company members – over 70 members from the local authorities – 'run' Northern Arts.

In reality, however, Northern Arts is run by a Board of 24 members. Eight of the members are from the local authorities, eight from the arts and media, and eight from the private sector and education (although there is overlap, with some members who could qualify to fit in more than one of these groups). There are also two places for non-voting local authority members with the status of observers. The previous government specified that the Board could have no more than 24 members, of which only a third could be from the local authorities; the addition of two local authority observers ensured that all five sub-regions (Counties) could each have two local authority representatives. Observer status has also been accorded to the Chair of the

Local Authority Forum (which meets quarterly and acts as a sounding board for Northern Arts policy), to an observer from the Association of North East Councils, and to the Regional Director of the Arts Council for England.

The Board is chaired by George Loggie, former leader of Wansbeck District Council and past Chair of Mid-Northumberland Arts Group and Northumberland Theatre Company (see Annex 13.1). The other councillors are not council leaders, but some are senior councillors and some have connections with the arts. Other members on the board include representatives from economic development and regeneration (Jonathan Blackie); education, research and training (Helen Pickering, Tom Shakespeare, Olivia Grant); English Heritage (Judith King); the Community Foundation (George Hepburn); the broadcast media (Mark Scrimshaw, Andrea Wonfor); architecture (Alan J Smith) and finance (Peter Rowley). Theatre is represented by Peter Cutchie and Patric Gilchrist, there is a director of a gallery (Chris Wadsworth), a poet and writer (Jo Shapcott) and the Education Advisor at Northern Sinfonia (Katherine Zeserson). Several are teachers or former teachers. To a large extent the Board reflects the diversity of Northern Arts' activities, interests and relationships, and also its geographical coverage.

Because of the councillor representation, but also as a result of the choice of other members, the Board has strong public sector representation; it could not be described as 'business-led'. The membership is, for the most part, unsurprising and includes some of the people in the region who are most active in the arts and related fields. Like most of the region's institutions it has an under-representation of women – only eight of the 24 Board members are women – and at present there is no ethnic minority representation on the Board.

### **Selection of Board members**

The Association of North East Councils handles the selection of councillors to serve on the Northern Arts Board, receiving



nominations from groups of local authorities in the different parts of the region. There is a place for a representative from each of the County Councils (or sub-regions) and from one of its constituent Districts – resulting in ten places, two of which are accorded ‘observer’ status. The choice rests with the local authorities, which may or may not select someone with an interest in the arts.

The selection of the other, non-councillor members is the responsibility of the Board, which considers what skills or interests are needed and sets criteria for selection, then delegates the process to a selection panel, a sub-committee of the Board. When vacancies arise – usually each year – Northern Arts advertises in the press for applicants. Some people are approached and invited to apply, particularly if they are considered to have expertise, interests or other qualities which the Board needs to complement the existing membership. Northern Arts aims to have a Board with a range of abilities and experience, with people interested in the different arts forms, drawn from across the region and reflecting equal opportunities in respect of gender, ethnicity and other characteristics.

The Board’s choice of members is passed to the Arts Council for ratification. In the case of the selection of the Chair, a similar procedure is followed, with an advertisement of the vacancy and, last time, a trawl through candidates seeking such public appointments who have submitted their names to the Cabinet Office. For the position of Chair, a maximum of three names is put forward to the Arts Council and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Northern Arts may state a preference, but the final selection is made by the Arts Council with the approval of the DCMS.

All Board members are appointed initially for three years. They may be re-appointed once, allowing a total of six years service; they cannot then be re-appointed until 12 months has elapsed after the end of their maximum term.

## **Roles, responsibilities and remuneration**

Board members’ duties include attendance at Board meetings, which deal with matters of policy and direction, and also various sub committees such as the Finance, Personnel, Audit and Lottery committees. In addition, there are time-limited groups set up to take forward specific projects and initiatives which involve Board members and people from other relevant organisations.

The time commitment for the Chair can be considerable: the current Chair spends about 2½ days per week on Northern Arts business. The other Board members devote one or two days a month. All Board members are unpaid, although the councillors may be able to receive attendance allowances from their councils and expenses can be reimbursed.

## **Accountability and openness**

Board meetings are not open to the public. Northern Arts, although owned by the local authorities, is not subject to the legislation on access to meetings which governs the local authorities. Agendas and papers are sent to the local authorities and some Board papers are available to the public in a digest which goes to local libraries as well as to local authorities and other agencies.

Northern Arts produces publications about its policies and activities, publishes information on its annual budget and grants awarded, and produces an Annual Report. These and other publications are available from Northern Arts and in main public libraries. Northern Arts also has an impressive website, which has clear information about the organisation and its operation; considerable practical detail about available funding support and associated policies; information sheets on specific issues such as programmes and policy developments; and the corporate plan. This website is a rare example of best practice. Unlike the websites of most public organisations, it invites interest and engagement. It includes a full staff list, with contact information, and has a list of Board members and their affiliations. Information

about vacancies on the Board was recently posted on this website with an invitation for people to apply. The website even offers information about accessibility of the Northern Arts building, gives a minicom number, and invites comment or advice on how to make the website more accessible particularly for people who are visually impaired.

Northern Arts has a customer care code which includes details about access to staff and the accessibility of public meetings and consultations. For example, there is a stated commitment to holding meetings at appropriate and accessible locations across the region and, where possible, at times convenient for those who must travel or make child care arrangements.

Board meetings are closed and there is scope for more openness and more accountability. But Northern Arts has gone a long way towards promoting openness through the provision of information, and has thought through some of the practical implications of its commitment to openness and how it can be achieved.

### **New developments: the Regional Cultural Consortium**

In line with the increasing regionalisation of policy and administration, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has recently set up 'Regional Cultural Consortia' which have a remit to promote and represent all cultural sectors in each region. They are thus intended to link together the arts with sport and also tourism.

The Consortia are 'independent advisory Non-Departmental Public Bodies' and have been set up in line with a framework drawn up by DCMS. The Consortia are required to draw up strategies to help improve delivery of cultural services in their regions, feeding into the work of the Regional Development Agencies and other organisations. Each will draw up a Regional Cultural Strategy by the end of 2000, which is intended to complement the Regional Development Agency's Regional Economic Strategy. The Consortia will also have a role in developing the strategies of National

Lottery distributor organisations. It is intended that they should 'provide a single voice to promote and speak for all the cultural and creative interests in the region'.

Chairs of the Consortia have been appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. In October 1999, Councillor George Gill, Leader of Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, was appointed to chair the North East Cultural Consortium, an appointment reflecting Gateshead's promotion of public art and commitment to cultural developments in regeneration schemes. The Chairs have been appointed for a period of three years and these positions are unpaid.

All the other members of the Board of the Consortium are nominated by organisations within the region. The North East Regional Cultural Consortium, which has chosen the name 'Culture North East', is composed of the Chair and 19 members (Annex 13.2) nominated from the following:

- Regional Cultural agencies – 7 places
- Local authorities – 5 places
- Creative industries – 5 places
- Education – 1 place
- Regional Development Agency (One NorthEast) – 1 place

The regional cultural agencies invited to nominate members are: English Heritage, North East Museums Service, Northern Arts, the Regional Sports Board, Northumbria Tourist Board, the Regional Archives Service and the Regional Libraries Service. The local authority members have been nominated by the Association of North East Councils. Practitioners from the creative industries have been nominated by existing forums (such as the regional forum on broadcasting, film and video) and the representative from education was nominated by the region's universities through their liaison group, Universities for the North East. They receive no remuneration for serving on the Board and all members, including the Chair, are initially appointed for three years, with that appointment normally renewable for one further term.

In addition, several observers are invited to attend Board meetings, including Mo O'Toole MEP, and representatives from the North East Regional Assembly, the Lottery Distributors, GO-NE, Culture North East Officers Group and the DCMS. It is expected that the Board will meet quarterly but will also have working groups. Culture North East is supported by a group of officers, mainly from the nominating organisations. The DCMS is providing a small amount of funding and the DCMS officer at GO-NE provides the secretariat function.

Board meetings are not open to the press and public, although it is hoped that occasional special meetings will be held offering an opportunity for others to attend and engage in open discussion. Papers and minutes are available for public inspection on request, unless they contain commercially confidential information. It is expected that the Regional Cultural Strategy will be subject to public consultation, possibly involving focus groups. Interestingly, the 'rules of procedure' state that 'other methods of increasing participation should be encouraged, e.g. an Internet group, open to all, allowing discussion of papers before they are formally considered by the Board'. This seems well worth trying – as far as we are aware, such a proposal has not been made by any of the other elected or appointed bodies in the region. Culture North East has a website, currently under construction, which includes a list of members and their addresses, and which will be making available the draft Regional Cultural Strategy for consultation.

**ANNEX 13.1 NORTHERN ARTS**

9-10 Osborne Terrace, Jesmond  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1NZ  
Tel: 0191 281 6334

Website: [www.arts.org.uk/directory/regions/northern](http://www.arts.org.uk/directory/regions/northern)

## Board members

George Loggie (Chair)

Former member, Wansbeck District Council (1970-99) and leader. Former Chair, Mid-Northumberland Arts Group and Northumberland Theatre Co. Member, Culture North East. Retired secondary school teacher.

Jonathan Blackie

Director of Regeneration, One NorthEast. Previously Director, Newcastle City Challenge. Governor, University of Teesside.

Peter Cutchie

Head of Theatre and Arts, Darlington Civic Theatre. Previously Theatre Manager, University of Warwick Arts Centre. Former Chair, Darlington Operatic Society.

Patric Gilchrist

Executive Director, Cumbria Theatre Trust. Previously Chief Executive, Theatr Clwyd.

Olivia Grant OBE

Chief Executive, Tyneside TEC. Director of the Further Education Development Agency. Member, National Advisory Council for Careers and Education Guidance. Board member, Northern Stage Theatre Co.

George Hepburn

Director, The Community Foundation (serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland). Previously Director, Greater London Alcohol Advisory Service.

Judith King

Artist and Visual Arts Officer, English Heritage. Previously Senior Lecturer for Outreach Art

Education, London Borough of Lambeth.

Helen Pickering

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Teesside. Board member, Tees Health Authority.

Peter Rowley

Chief Executive, Darlington Building Society. Board member, Tees Valley TEC; Darlington & District Hospice Movement Ltd; Darlington College of Technology; Darlington Partnership Ltd., Tees Valley Tomorrow Ltd.

Mark Scrimshaw (Vice Chair)

Producer, BBC Television North. Vice Chair of Board of Visitors, HMP Durham. Former Chair, Live Theatre Co.

Dr Tom Shakespeare

Newcastle University academic, based at the International Centre for Life, Newcastle. Writer and broadcaster on disability and genetics.

Jo Shapcott

Poet/freelance writer and Northern Arts Literary Fellow. Previously Lecturer, Rolle College; Education Officer, Arts Council; Fellow in Writing, Cambridge University; Education Officer, South Bank Centre; Literature Officer, Arts Council; Manager, Opera and Music Theatre Forum. Member, Poetry Society Advisory Council; Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Winner (twice) of the National Poetry Competition.

Alan J Smith

Chair, Red Box Design Group (Architects). Chair, Baltic Trust.

Chris Wadsworth

Director, Castlegate House  
(Commercial Gallery),  
Cockermouth, Cumbria.

Andrea Wonfor  
Joint Managing Director, Granada  
Productions.

Katherine Zeserson  
Education Adviser, Northern Sinfonia.  
Previously member of 'Them Wifies'.  
Currently developing an arts and  
training company, 'Original Zing'.

Councillor Bill Brady (Observer)  
Member, South Tyneside Metropolitan  
Borough Council and Vice-  
Chair, Cultural and Leisure  
Committee. School governor.

Councillor Sylvia Connolly  
Member, Middlesbrough Borough  
Council and Deputy Leader.

Councillor Brian Ebbatson  
Member, Durham County Council.  
Former languages teacher.

Councillor Jack Fryer  
Member, Allerdale District Council.

Councillor Gwynneth Hanson (Observer)  
Member (until May 2000), Hartlepool  
Borough Council.

Councillor Peter Hillman  
Member, Northumberland County  
Council

Councillor Stephen Matthews  
Member, Cumbria County Council.  
Bookshop owner.

Councillor David Williams  
Member, Wansbeck District Council.  
English Co-ordinator at  
Ashington Bothal County  
Middle School. Chair, Mid-  
Northumberland Arts Group.  
Board member, '20,000 Voices';  
NTC Theatre Co. Author of  
children's plays.

Councillor John Burton  
Member, Sedgefield District Council.  
Agent to Tony Blair, MP. Chair,  
'The Arts are Ours'. Member,  
Culture North East. Folk  
musician. Retired teacher.

Councillor Maureen Madden  
Member, North Tyneside Metropolitan  
Borough Council.

**ANNEX 13.2 CULTURE NORTH EAST**  
(The North East Regional Cultural Consortium)

Secretariat contact:

Jamie McKay

Government Office for the North East

Wellbar House, Gallowgate,

Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4TD

Tel: 0191 202 3878

Website: [www.thenortheast.com/culturenortheast](http://www.thenortheast.com/culturenortheast)

**Board members**

Councillor George Gill (Chair)  
Leader, Gateshead Metropolitan  
Borough Council

Sue Underwood (Vice Chair)  
Director, North East Museums  
Service

George Loggie  
Chair, Northern Arts

Patrick Conway  
Director, Arts, Libraries and  
Museums, Durham County Council

Jane Darbyshire  
Architect. Former Board member,  
Tyne & Wear Development  
Corporation

Sarah Drummond  
BBC, Newcastle

David Fleming  
Director, Tyne & Wear Museums

Liz Rees  
Tyne & Wear Archives

Councillor John Burton  
Member, Sedgefield District Council.  
Agent to Tony Blair MP

Jacqui Taylor  
The Image Group, Middlesbrough

Scott Henshall  
Councillor Winnie Lowes  
Member, Northumberland County  
Council

Councillor Ione Rippeth  
Member (Liberal Democrat),  
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough  
Council

Hugh Morgan Williams  
Board member, One NorthEast. Vice  
Chair, CBI Northern Region

James Wright  
Vice-Chancellor, Newcastle  
University

Deborah Hunter  
Pilgrim Films Ltd

Councillor Bob Pendlebury  
Deputy Leader, Durham County  
Council. Chair, Northumbria Tourist  
Board

Councillor Don Robson  
Leader, Durham County Council.  
Member, Regional Sports Board

Councillor Aileen A Handy  
Member (Labour), Sunderland City  
Council

Councillor Dorothy Long  
Member, Darlington Borough  
Council

## 14. CONCLUSION

### Who runs the North East ... now?

The simple answer to the question we have posed is: predominantly, middle aged, mainly middle class men. Around three-quarters of the people in charge of most of the region's public institutions are men. And the most powerful positions in these institutions are, to an even greater extent, held by men – older men. Younger people – under 45 – are largely absent from decision-making structures and processes; younger women, in particular, have little involvement in running the region's institutions. In addition, few people from the ethnic minority communities are involved in running the region, though it is important to bear in mind that the North East has a small ethnic minority population. Perhaps more surprising, in view of the high incidence of disability in the region, few disabled people have been appointed to serve on the Boards of the region's institutions.

Probably many people in the North East assume that the region is run by a small clique of individuals, 'quangocrats' who serve on several bodies. Certainly, there are some individuals who are very active in public life, as revealed in the biographies we present in this report. But the study shows that power is more dispersed than is commonly supposed, at least in terms of the numbers of people involved; there are, for example, over 1200 councillors and hundreds of school governors. There is a hierarchy, however, of institutions and positions, with some key people, whose names appear time and again, at the 'top' of the pyramid. These people play a major part in running the region, although power is shared among them.

There are connections forged by interlocking membership of the region's institutions, creating a complex network. This may be regarded negatively, as demonstrating the way in which power is shared amongst 'usual suspects' or can be

regarded, positively, as exemplifying effective networking, even 'joined-up governance'. In view of the large numbers of people involved in running the North East, concern about a concentration of power in the hands of a few people who are 'on everything' may well be misplaced. It misses the point; it is the narrow *range* of people, rather than the number, which should be of most concern.

The distribution of power and influence in the North East undoubtedly reflects its cultural history and politics. Traditionally, men have been in charge of the region's public affairs and this Labour fiefdom has settled into a consensual style of politics, hardly challenged and seemingly immune to change. But the economy and society have radically changed – and change is continuing. The way the region is run has to respond to new realities and requirements if governance is to be both inclusive and effective.

### Representation and representativeness

Those who run the region's institutions are generally from a narrow range of backgrounds and do not adequately reflect the diversity of the region and its people.

The North East's politicians represent the region but are not representative of it. For example, only four out of the 30 MPs, and only two out of 25 Council Leaders are women. As the *Chairman* of the Association of North East Councils, Councillor Michael Davey, recently commented:

'The proportion of women decision-makers in local government across the country, not just here in the North East, is woefully low. Women's views often take a back seat because they are so under-represented'.<sup>1</sup>

The age of councillors – average age 56 – must be a cause for concern in relation to sustaining local government in the longer

term and particularly in ensuring that the concerns of younger people are heard and understood. It is not surprising that local government has a lacklustre image, or that many younger people are uninterested in it, or that election turnouts are so low.

The re-invigoration of democracy may well be helped by measures to encourage more people to vote. But the issues go much deeper than this and require action on several fronts. Politics needs to be enlivened through the involvement of a wider range of people, as candidates and as voters. A greater diversity of people and views is required and voters should be able to see people like themselves, of their generation and gender, active in politics and representing their concerns. Low turnouts, not so much for the election of MPs but certainly for the election of MEPs and local councillors, indicate that democracy in the region is at a low ebb. 'Modernisation' has to be about more than structural change; it also has to mean a greater diversity and, with it, better quality of politicians, especially in local government.

At least MPs, MEPs and councillors have a democratic mandate which, in the case of MPs, is accorded credibility and legitimacy by reasonable turnouts at elections. The same cannot be said for many of the other institutions which run the North East, some centrally appointed quangos and others a mixture of (often indirectly) elected and appointed people.

It is often unclear who the non-executive people who sit on this array of Boards represent or to whom they are accountable. There are usually multiple accountabilities, made more confusing by formal, stated lines of accountability along with informal or supposed accountability to 'the community', for example. In addition, most of these organisations are run by a narrow, unrepresentative group of people. It is apparent that few have got to grips with ensuring that consumers, the people who use or are supposed to benefit from their services or activities, are properly represented on their Boards. The concept of service user involvement, now

a live issue in the voluntary sector, seems not to have reached organisations such as TECs or else is being interpreted in tokenistic ways by the addition of just one or two Board members in some way 'representing' users or consumers.

Some organisations have given serious consideration to achieving 'balance' in their membership, with respect to factors such as gender, background, interests and experience. Interestingly, some of the quangos, made up of members appointed by ministers, have been the most alert to issues of balance, their practices shaped by arrangements put in place after the Nolan Committee reports. One NorthEast's Board represents a careful balancing act (but only three out of 13 members are women) and appointments to Health Authorities and Trusts have been linked to targets to appoint more women and carers, for example. The NHS has recently been strongly criticised for political patronage, with some justification, but this in itself is a demonstration that there is oversight of the appointments process and concern about balance. Other local public bodies are not subject to such oversight and discipline.

Some institutions pay little more than lip service to balance and representativeness. Some have given little consideration to the meaning, value or implications of being 'representative' in the composition of their boards. The governing bodies of some FE colleges and universities, the Boards of TECs and some housing associations leave themselves open to the charge of being self-perpetuating cliques of the relatively great and the good or, at least, a group of the 'usual suspects'. No doubt some have yet even to consider and reflect upon the narrow composition of their Boards, the dearth of women and younger people – and what this says about their organisations and means in relation to their collective understanding.

A central issue for many of these organisations is whether their Boards should be made up of 'experts' or of people who are representative of the community in terms of their gender, age



and so on. Most have opted for ‘experts’ in a very limited sense, largely interpreted as meaning people with the skills to run a business. The push in the 1980s to make public services more ‘business-like’ made its mark on these organisations. A particular example was the NHS, which had Boards dominated by business people, solicitors and accountants - people who could certainly make sense of the balance sheet but often knew little about patients’ concerns and did not themselves use the NHS. This legacy is still very much in evidence, though now much less so in the NHS. It is understandable on an ideological level, but curious that it persists since it produces Boards which actually replicate the expertise and skills of the executive staff.

If the aim is to secure relevant, accountable public services, sensitive and responsive to needs, a Board which is representative of the community has much to commend it. Governors of a university should surely include people from the local community who may use its services, disabled people with particular needs, mature students and women – not just businessmen. Police Authorities, formally charged with representing the local community should, surely, have young people and a percentage of women members, higher than the 27% the North East Police Authorities have. The point is that diversity brings different perspectives, strengthens the organisation and enhances its credibility. Older men are not, of course, the only people having wisdom and judgement. So-called ‘ordinary people’ have much to offer – a lesson well learnt in the best of the regeneration partnerships.

### **Better practice: an agenda for reform**

Better representation, and representation by people who are representative of the community in its diversity, are essential to the reinvigoration and reform of the region’s governance.

Politicians are the representatives of the people, while those who serve on the Boards of public bodies represent the

public (at the very least, as taxpayers) and are custodians of public services. As a matter of principle, the people in charge of the region’s affairs should be democratically elected. The only defence of governance by appointment, or even indirect election, is that real democracy would not result in the right people, with skills and experience, running these bodies. The ‘right people’ would not stand for election and the voters would not bother to vote. Unfortunately, given the weak condition of representative democracy in the North East, this may not be wide of the mark. However, this does not undermine the democratic principle; rather it represents a challenge.

Local councils and political parties should be seeking ways of increasing interest in local affairs and politics, widening the range of candidates and raising turnout. So far, their efforts to do this have largely been half-hearted. Moreover, it has to be said that some of them are hardly encouraging participation by deciding to establish cabinet meetings behind closed doors, nor do they win public respect for local government by proposing big rises in councillors’ allowances.

Other bodies, composed of unelected people, need to consider which constituencies or groups are represented round the table and which are absent – and then seek to remedy deficiencies and correct imbalances. They need also to consider how democracy might be injected into the process such that more members are elected – probably by specified groups – rather than just chosen and appointed by the existing Board members.

The reinvigoration of local government has to go hand in hand with the democratisation of the unelected bodies. Only when participation in local government is increased and apathy is reduced would it really be possible successfully to make the case for having more elections to more bodies. Local government has to be the key to democratic renewal. If it continues to be unrepresentative in the composition of its councillors and turnouts stay low, it will

not have the ability to resist being bypassed by a central government which is already starting to directly fund schools, favour community-led regeneration partnerships and is dubious of the merits of local government. Without a revival of local government it will be hard to push for an extension of democratic local governance – or, for that matter, make a sufficiently strong case for a directly-elected regional government.

These are the overarching, big themes – the main elements of an agenda for reform based on a vision of what governance could be. There are also simple, straightforward initiatives and actions which the region's institutions could undertake *now* in order to enhance accountability, openness and increase participation.

#### 1. **The membership of public bodies**

All the region's institutions, elected as well as unelected, should regularly review the structure and composition of their membership – those in charge of running the organisation. Does the structure embrace all the relevant stakeholders and interests? Does its composition include the required skills and experience? How representative is it in terms of gender, ethnic composition and people with disabilities? Is there a real commitment to equal opportunities and is this reflected in the profile of members? Organisations may find it helpful to have an independent, external assessment of these issues - some may struggle to see and acknowledge the biases in their membership.

#### 2. **Selection of Board members**

The procedures for selection of Board members should be transparent and open. Vacancies should be widely advertised (in the press, on websites and elsewhere) and individuals encouraged to apply. The criteria for selection should be published and be accessible. Where new members are selected by existing Board members, an independent assessor should be involved in the process.

#### 3. **Open meetings**

Meetings should be open to the public and the press except where confidential matters are discussed. Agendas, minutes and papers should also be available. Moreover, efforts need to be made to encourage attendance by advertising meetings, holding them in places and at times which are likely to encourage attendance, and adopting a format which acknowledges the public and makes proceedings comprehensible.

#### 4. **Information**

All public bodies in the region must provide and communicate information about what they do and who runs them. All should publish an annual report which is written in an accessible style and which aims to communicate to the public what the organisation is doing and what its policies are. The corporate plan should also be published. These documents, together with agendas, minutes and papers for meetings, should be easily available on request, be sent to the relevant local libraries, and made available on websites.

The provision of information is of particular relevance to regional governance. The North East Regional Assembly, perhaps with the support of One NorthEast, could have an important role in mapping and monitoring public bodies in the region. By taking responsibility for collating such information and making it widely available, the Assembly could help to ensure that governance in the North East is more transparent, better understood and more accountable.

#### 5. **E-democracy**

The development of the Internet now offers tremendous opportunities for the provision of information, yet many organisations provide little or no information on their websites about what they are doing and how they are governed. There is now no excuse for not providing this kind of information – the Internet makes it so easy. All organisations should have websites which are easy to understand and navigate, which offer

reports and all the papers from meetings, and have information about governance. Organisations should operate with a presumption in favour of maximum disclosure and design websites accordingly. The website should have details about who runs the organisation, including biographical material and declared interests. It is remarkable that very few of the unelected organisations which run public services in the North East give information on their websites about who runs them; this has made the compilation of this report more difficult – and more necessary.

### **Public service and ‘active citizens’**

In exploring who runs the North East it is evident that a considerable number of people are engaged in public service and these ‘active citizens’ make an important contribution to the life of the region. They help to ensure that public institutions operate efficiently and effectively. Many devote a substantial amount of time and effort to this work and take on major responsibilities. It is right to recognise their commitment to public service.

Reviewing a wide range of activities and institutions does reveal great differences in the nature and forms of public service. Some people are elected, many others are appointed or selected; some are paid, others unpaid; some have real responsibility while others have responsibilities which are, in practice, largely nominal. Consequently, there is some confusion about what public service is, what it entails and, perhaps especially, whether it should involve financial reward. It is hard to see why school governors are not paid while members of police authorities are; and ambiguities and sensitivities are revealed by the terminology of payment – salaries, allowances, honoraria, remuneration. Probably most people feel that MPs should be paid and know, broadly, what they do. Despite their considerable responsibilities, many people would nevertheless question

the payment of councillors. Probably, many would not know whether Board members of Health Trusts, for example, are paid or what they do.

There is a need to deal with the confusion that surrounds public service – and this report should help to do that. But much of the responsibility lies with the organisations themselves. They need to be open, demonstrate accountability and publicise what they do and how they are run. They are responsible for ensuring that public service is recognised, is respected and that active citizens – from all walks of life – are able to contribute to running *their* region.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Northern Echo*, 9.3.2000, p.8. Councillor Davey appealed for women to take a more active role in public life. He said that the Association of North East Councils and the North East Regional Assembly have set up a women’s issues group to look at ways of involving more women in decision-making and to increase their number in local government. This call coincided with International Women’s Day.