

# **Who Runs the North East Now? Governance and Governing in an English Region**

## **Summary Report**

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*'If one meets a powerful person..... ask them five questions:*

*What power have you got?*

*Where did you get it from?*

*In whose interests do you exercise it?*

*To whom are you accountable?*

*And how can we get rid of you?*

*If you cannot get rid of the people who govern you, you do not live in a democratic system'.*

*Tony Benn, MP (Final Speech, House of Commons: March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2001)*

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## **Who runs the North East?**

This report summarises findings from our study of public services in the North East of England – and who is in charge of them. We have explored what different organisations do and how they are governed, in order to raise awareness and promote informed debate. Ultimately, the aim is to improve the management, development and provision of the public services that we all use and all pay for.

We have sought to provide a map of the institutional landscape of the North East, focusing on its governance. Despite covering 100 organisations it is still incomplete and in some ways inadequate. Much more could be said about how policies are made and decisions are taken; about the relationship between officers (paid staff) and councillors or board members; and about the different ways the public might influence how public services are run. And there could be other maps: of corporate power in the North East, of the voluntary sector, and of the ownership of resources. But it is a starting point for a better understanding of at least some of the landscape and, we hope, a stimulus for talking about how it could be improved.

## **The research**

The original idea for this research goes back to the 1990s when we started investigating Quangos – the unelected and often controversial 'Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations' that were proliferating at that time. Subsequently, in 2000, we did a wide-ranging study of governance in our region, raising concerns about the evident 'democratic deficit' and lack of transparency. Since then, we have watched many institutions (and the individuals running them) come and go, and have increasingly wondered what -- if anything -- has changed. We came to feel that the time had come to look again at governance in the North East, using the previous study as a point of reference. We wondered if governance had become more representative or accountable. Is the region still run by the 'male, pale and

stale’, the ‘perpetually selected’, or the ‘usual suspects’? And, given the demise of regional institutions, how much power and influence does the North East now have?

We put a proposal to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and they very kindly agreed to support new research on ‘who runs the North East’. The Newcastle-based law firm Muckle LLP and the Institute for Local Governance at Durham University also agreed to support the work.

The research has been undertaken by Professor Fred Robinson at St Chad’s College, Durham University and Professor Keith Shaw of Northumbria University (lead authors of the study in 2000), together with Sue Regan, also at Northumbria University. It draws on documentary material, information from websites, surveys of individual organisations, and extensive local knowledge. Most of the information was gathered in 2017.

This Summary Report provides a concise overview of the research findings. Much more detail is given in the Main Report, available at: <https://www.stchads.ac.uk/research/publications/>.

## **Structures and Power**

It is not easy to get to grips with an institutional landscape that is idiosyncratic, fragmented and frequently changing. A useful starting point is the key distinction between the institutions of elected government, and those organisations providing public services that are largely governed by people who are appointed.

There are two main components of elected government: central government (including Parliament and government departments) and local government (local councils). In addition, (at least for the time being) there is the European Union, including the European Parliament.

At central government level, the 2.6 million people in the North East of England (comprising Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and the Tees Valley) are represented by 29 MPs in the House of Commons, out of a total of 650 MPs. They do not ‘run’ the North East of course, but they do provide a voice for the region and are there to serve their constituents. Their power and influence is very limited, not simply because they are few in number but, primarily, because they are almost all (26 out of 29 of them) Labour MPs and therefore currently members of the Opposition. There are only 3 Conservative MPs in the region, and only one of them (Guy Opperman, MP for Hexham) is a member of the Government. Most North East MPs are also relatively inexperienced, having entered the Commons in the last few years; only 9 of them became MPs before 2010. All are paid -- the basic salary is £74,962 a year.

In **Parliament and Government**, the region now has remarkably little influence, especially when compared with the situation we described in our report in 2000. At that time, Labour was in power and the North East’s MPs included the Prime Minister Tony Blair, MP for Sedgefield. Of the 22 members of the Cabinet at that time, 6 were North East MPs.

There continues to be a widespread lack of understanding about the **European Parliament’s** functions and institutional structures. Despite the activities of the 3 MEP's in the region (2

Labour and one UKIP), few people in the region would be able to name them and probably most have little awareness of what the European Parliament actually does. Which partly helps to explain why as many as 58% of North Easterners voted Leave in the 2016 referendum.

The institutions and activities of **local government** are rather more visible. In the North East there are 12 'principal' councils, all single-tier local authorities providing the full range of council services, ranging from adult care to transport, and from libraries to refuse collection. Two North East councils are led by directly elected Mayors, the rest by Leaders chosen by councillors from the majority party. All councillors receive a basic allowance, averaging about £9,000 a year, with Leaders' payments ranging between £23,000 and £46,000 and Elected local Mayors receiving over £60,000.

Labour remains dominant (and often unchallenged) in local government in the North East -- as was the case in 2000. Eleven of the region's 12 councils are Labour, and 71% of North East councillors are from the Labour Party. A big change since 2000 has been a substantial reduction in the number of councils and councillors. Local government restructuring in both Northumberland and County Durham in 2009 resulted in the abolition of 13 second-tier district councils. In 2000, there were 1,279 councillors in the region's 25 councils; today there are 770 councillors in 12 councils.

Another big change has been the introduction of cabinets, effectively concentrating power within a small group of senior councillors. Of the 770 councillors, just over 100 are cabinet members, holding positions of power in their councils and in the region. Early ideas that Cabinets could include members from the opposition Parties have mostly not been put into practice in the North East, with 11 council Cabinets now drawing all their members from the ruling Party.

Local councils have experienced major reductions in resources over the last decade, leaving them with relatively little room for manoeuvre. They have also seen their functions reduced by, for example, schools becoming Academies and council housing being transferred to Housing Associations. That said, local councils are still responsible for a wide range of services, account for a quarter of all public expenditure and they exercise influence via their membership of a myriad of boards and committees (the 'extended world' of local government) covering such areas as **Fire and Rescue, Tourism, Transport, Environment and Museums and Libraries**.

The UK (and England in particular) has a highly centralised system of government. Back in 2000, that had been augmented by the recent devolution of power to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions. Regional institutions had been established, including Government Office North East, the Regional Development Agency (One North East), and a Regional Assembly. All were abolished by the Coalition Government that came into office in 2010. Since then, there have been small steps towards devolution to the sub-regional level.

**Local Enterprise Partnerships** to promote economic development were set up, one for the northern part of the North East region and another for the southern part (Tees Valley). The Government has also encouraged the establishment of '**Combined Authorities**', bringing

together a group of councils in the north of the region and another in the south in order to co-ordinate some strategic functions. The Combined Authority in the south of the region, covering Tees Valley, accepted the Government's 'devolution deal', which included having an Elected Mayor for Tees Valley; the North East Combined Authority in the northern part of the region ultimately did not (although a North of Tyne deal involving Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland is now mooted).

Until 2012, Police Forces were governed by nominated and appointed Police Authorities. That changed when the Government introduced **Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)**, who are directly elected by local residents. There are 3 Police and Crime Commissioners in the North East, concerned with the oversight and strategic governance of the Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland Police Force areas. They have a significant amount of power, but their position may be considered to be weakened by the low turnouts in PCC elections. All are paid, ranging from £70,000 a year in Durham and Cleveland to £85,000 in Northumberland.

While some public services are managed and delivered directly by central or local government, many services are routed through appointed organisations with their own (idiosyncratic) governance structures. Most of these organisations (such as the NHS, the Further Education Colleges and the Universities) are run by boards or governing bodies that predominantly comprise people who are appointed, not elected.

In the NHS, **Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)** and the **NHS Foundation Trusts** are now the key decision-making organisations. In the North East, there are 10 CCGs responsible for planning and commissioning local health services. Each CCG is led by a governing body which appoints its own members -- mainly GPs, together with some other clinicians and one or two local people. On the 'provider' side, the region's 11 NHS Foundation Trusts manage and deliver services in hospitals and in the community. They are each run by a board of directors consisting of appointed non-executive directors and the senior executives. The non-executive directors are paid, with the chair receiving £50-55,000 per year. These Trusts also have a Council of Governors, made up of some elected and some appointed people, which aims to provide a link between the community and the Trust board. The governors formally approve appointments to the Trust board. But most power -- and that is considerable -- resides with the board of directors.

The public sector delivers education through 1,159 **state schools** in the North East, 19 **Further Education Colleges**, and 5 **Universities**. All have some form of governing body. For schools, the composition of the governing body varies according to its status. 'Maintained' schools have a mix of elected governors (including governors elected by parents) and appointed governors (including, for faith schools, governors nominated by the 'foundation' body, such as the Church of England). School governors are not paid. About a quarter of North East state schools are now run by Academy Trusts -- charitable companies with appointed trustees and with limited connection to the local authority.

Nearly all the members of the governing bodies of Further Education Colleges are appointed by the existing members. It is much the same with Universities: the majority of the members of University governing bodies are also appointed by the existing governors. Leaving aside the paid staff on FE College or University governing bodies, their members are usually not paid.

Our research has also covered Arts, Culture and Sport. In the field of Arts and Culture, key funding organisations are **Arts Council England (North)** and the **Heritage Lottery Fund: North East**. Both have some decision-making powers devolved to them by their parent bodies. Both have appointed boards. Only the chair of Arts Council England (North) is paid (£6,400 a year). There is also a **North East Culture Partnership**, a promotional organisation made up of 12 nominated councillors and 12 people selected from other sectors. In Sport, there is no longer a regional body, but instead four **County Sports Partnerships** overseen by appointed members.

Finally, we have looked at **Housing Associations** – now the main providers of social housing. Most of the bigger Housing Associations are responsible for former Council housing stock which has been transferred to them. They are charitable organisations and also important providers of public services. They are run by boards comprising (mostly paid) non-executive directors and one or two executive directors. There may be places set aside for councillors nominated by local councils and places for tenant representatives. But, all members are appointed by the existing board.

### **How representative?**

Most people would agree that the people who are in charge of public services should have appropriate skills, technical and professional knowledge. However, we also expect councils and boards to be inclusive and, consequently, diverse. It is generally considered important and valuable to have people who can offer insights based on their own day to day experiences as women or men, and as people from a particular community, culture, class or place.

In 2000, our research showed that the North East was largely run by white, middle-aged, men: the ‘pale, male and stale’ stereotype. Our new research shows that some things have (encouragingly) changed, but many things have stayed much the same.

One of the most striking findings of the study is that there are now far more women serving as MPs and as councillors. This is largely a result of the Labour Party’s use of all-women shortlists in elections. In 2000, only 4 out of the 30 MPs in the North East were women. Today, 14 of the region’s 29 MPs are women (amounting to 48% of the region’s MPs, well above the national figure of 32%). The gender balance has also improved in local government. In 2000, only 23% of North East councillors were women; by 2017 that had grown to 43%. Some councils have seen a major shift: for example, in 2000, only 8% of councillors on Durham County Council were women; today it is 43%.

However, it is important to note that men are still in the top jobs, just as they were in 2000. 10 of the 12 council Leaders are men -- and that, of course, in turn shapes the gender composition of those organisations that have senior councillors on their boards. It is to be hoped that that will change over the next few years as the female councillors move up to more senior positions.

On the Boards which have mainly appointed members, the gender composition appears to be improving (so many structures have changed that direct comparisons are mostly not possible). However, it is still the case that almost all boards have a male majority; examples of a female majority are rare.

In the NHS, for example, only one out of 21 organisations (the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust) has more women than men on its board. Only one out of 18 Further Education Colleges (New College Durham) has a governing body consisting of more women than men (although the majority of College Principals are women). The overall trend is towards better gender balance but some organisations have further to go than others. For example, in 2000 81% of the people on University governing bodies were men; that is now down to 64%. But there are some very male-dominated boards, notably the Local Enterprise Partnerships (80% of board members on the two LEPs are men) and some Housing Associations (the board of the Gentoo Group is the most unbalanced in terms of gender, consisting of 12 men and one woman).

Very few people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are on councils or public sector boards in the North East. Only one of the region's MPs has a BAME background (Chi Onwurah, MP for Newcastle Central). Seven of the 12 councils have no councillors from BAME backgrounds. In the NHS fewer than half of the CCGs and Trusts had someone from a BAME background on their boards. (Some CCGs have a number of BAME GPs and clinicians on their governing bodies, bringing the overall proportion for the region's CCGs to 9%). Only 4 out of the 9 largest Housing Associations in the region have someone from a BAME background on their board. Two of the region's 5 Universities have no BAME governors. Only one member of the Arts Council England (North) board has a BAME background. The BAME population of the North East is relatively low (4.8%) but, we would argue, should be represented on all these organisations, not least to bring diverse perspectives to decision-making about services which affect all our communities.

Disabled people are very substantially under-represented, except in the case of councillors – who are generally older than others running the region's organisations and therefore more likely to have disabilities. 17% of councillors in the North East are disabled (2013 data). Remarkably, our survey responses indicated that hardly anyone running the NHS organisations is disabled; none of the CCG governing bodies has a governor who is disabled, only one of the 11 Foundation Trusts has a disabled board member. Only 4 out of 14 Further Education Colleges has a disabled governor. The 5 Universities identified only one disabled governor (two of the Universities said they did not know).

In terms of age, the region's public services are largely governed by middle-aged people. In most organisations, people under 45 are hardly represented. For example, only 10% of CCG governors are under 45. Only 6 of the region's MPs are under 45. In Further and Higher Education younger people on governing bodies are usually the Student Union representatives. The average age of the region's councillors is now 60 and many are considerably older than that (20% are over 70). And councillors are getting older; the average age was 56 in 1997. There are very few younger councillors in the North East – only 11% are under 45.



Looking at the profiles of politicians and non-executive board members it is very clear that the North East is now largely run by people with professional and 'middle class' backgrounds; they have become the 'usual suspects'. The 'pitmen politicians' have almost disappeared. Only 2 of the current 29 MPs had previously been employed in traditional manual jobs (both of them in coal mining), while 23 of the 29 have had a University education and several have only ever worked in politics. Similarly, in local government, 52% of the region's councillors had degrees and 80% of those who had not yet retired were in managerial and professional jobs.

The various unelected bodies seem very inclined to appoint people with professional and business backgrounds (adding to the skills and experiences already represented by the executive members) rather than 'active citizens', 'lay people' or voices representing the locality.

'Experts' from financial and business services appear to be much in demand – perhaps because public services are run increasingly like private sector businesses and commercial success is emphasised. Many come from accountancy, financial services, law, HR, PR and property firms. The Universities are a case in point: they have many more governors who are employed in financial services than governors from BAME backgrounds or with disabilities. There are lawyers and consultants, but often no one representing the interests of residents (councillors, for example) or the workforce (trade union representatives, for example).

In our survey of organisations, we did ask them how they sought to encourage and ensure diversity, and most cited their formal diversity policies and commitment to fair recruitment practices. Looking at the composition of many boards, we wonder how effective these are – and whether organisations discuss what diversity means in practice and why it matters.

Organisations are liable to narrowly define who 'fits' on the board (and who doesn't). If they always look for experienced private or public sector managers - or people in their own image - there is a danger of complacency and lack of challenge. Moreover, the resulting exclusion of other experiences and other points of view is likely to mean less critical debate, less creativity and poorer decision-making.



## Overview of key features of governance in North East England

Organisations (no.)	Governance	No of members	Males %	Females %	BAME %	Disabled %	Aged over 45 %	Paid?
Parliament – House of Commons	Elected	29 MPs	52	48	3	N/A	86	Yes
European Parliament	Elected	3 MEPs	67	33	0	N/A	33	Yes
Councils – Local Authorities (12)	Elected	770	57*	43*	1	17**	89**	Yes
Local Enterprise Partnerships (2)	Appointed (+ Council Leaders)	35	80	20	6	0	N/A	No
NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (10)	Lay members are appointed (+ staff and GPs )	139	57	43	9	0	90	Yes
NHS Foundation Trusts (11)	Non-execs are appointed (+ staff on board)	156	63	37	4	<1	96	Yes
Further Education Colleges (19)	Most appointed	200+	63	37	3	2	80	No
Universities (5)	Most appointed	109	64	36	3	<1	N/A	No (with exceptions)
Police and Crime Commissioners (3)	Elected	3	67	33	0	N/A	100	Yes
Arts Council England (North)	Appointed	14	67	33	<1	<1	N/A	No (but Chair paid)
Heritage Lottery Fund NE	Appointed	7	57	43	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
Housing Associations (9)***	Appointed (+ staff)	94	68	32	4	3	85	Yes

\* Data from authors' 2017 analysis. \*\* Data from Association's National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013. \*\*\* Data relates to 9 largest HAs in North East

## How accountable?

In the North East, as elsewhere, there is considerable disenchantment with traditional governance. There now seems to be little trust in the people who run things – elites, politicians and the ‘establishment’. There is widespread alienation from political institutions and processes, coupled with a sense of powerlessness. There is also a lack of public understanding of the structures of governance and how they work – a lack of understanding that some institutions may do little to dispel.

In relation to accountability a key distinction is, again, between elected and appointed institutions. Put simply, people who are elected can be voted out. In the North East, party political affiliations are fairly clear-cut; at the 2017 General Election 26 of the region’s 29 MPs got more than 50% of the vote in their constituency. However, this first-past-the-post system reduces democratic accountability. In 2017, Labour got 55.4% of votes in the region as a whole – and won 26 of the 29 seats.

Low turnout compromises accountability and implies public disengagement, perhaps indifference. That may be not so much of a problem with MPs, since turnout at the 2017 General Election was 66% (up from 61% in 2015). It is, however, a problem in local government, with turnouts averaging just 35% of the electorate. In addition, council elections also operate on the first-past-the-post basis, which advantages the dominant party and leaves those who vote for other parties effectively unrepresented.

It is notable that elections to the European Parliament are conducted through a Proportional Representation system applied to a party list, resulting in the election of 2 Labour MEPs and 1 UKIP MEP. The election of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Elected Mayor in Tees Valley also used ‘fairer’ transferrable vote systems. But, these elections were all, to some extent, undermined by low turnouts; the last European elections in 2014 had a turnout of only 30.9% in the region (although the EU referendum in 2016 secured a turnout of 69.3%). Turnouts for the election of the 3 PCCs in 2016 ranged from 18% to 32%. Only 21% of the electorate took part in the election of the new Mayor for Tees Valley in 2017.

Most of the members of governing bodies and boards are not elected, so they cannot be voted out by the public. There are some checks and balances; in the NHS the Councils of Governors have some power over Trust boards (but in reality, this is limited) and there are, of course, national regulatory bodies overseeing local governance in health, education, police, arts and culture, and housing. But to a large extent, the local bodies are self-selecting, self-governing and subject to little public scrutiny.

Public scrutiny relies on the availability of information. The amount of information they actually have to provide varies. Generally central and local government bodies are bound by law to provide a considerable amount of information about their activities, policies, decisions and spending, and to hold meetings open to the public. Other organisations also have to meet information requirements as set out by their regulatory bodies. Some have to hold their meetings in public, but others do not. NHS bodies have to advertise their board meetings and

admit the public, while meetings of University governing bodies and Housing Association boards, for example, take place behind closed doors.

Governance standards have improved, with wide use of the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life (Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership) and more rigorous appointments procedures than in the past. Most organisations delivering public services are nowadays bound by the Freedom of Information Act. Another major change since 2000 has been the provision of a great deal of material on websites. In 2000, some organisations did not yet have websites and others had limited information posted on them. In 2000, we had to specifically ask for information - such as the names of board members - that is now available on most websites.

The quality of websites does, however, vary. With some it is easy to find information about who is in charge, their profiles, and perhaps even a Register of Interests, as well as extensive documents from their meetings. Others are out of date or have very little information and give an impression of lack of transparency, even secrecy. The Housing Associations, for example, all hold their board meetings in private and do not publish their board minutes or papers on their websites. In fact, many of the organisations we surveyed have information on their websites that is very hard to find and out of date. Some seem coy about the remuneration paid to board members – such information may be buried in hard-to-find annual reports and, in too many cases, was not provided when we asked for it in our surveys.

Organisations like Housing Associations would say that they have other ways of informing and consulting the public, and that is true (at least, with regard to their tenants). But the key to accountability is openness – and that must include information about who governs and what they say and do. That is all the more necessary in the case of organisations that are run by people who cannot be voted out.

## **Challenges**

There are reasons to be optimistic about the provision of public services in the North East. At a basic level, we can say that there is no evidence of great and widespread inefficiency, incompetence or corruption, and many, if not most, organisations have managed reasonably well through a prolonged period of ‘austerity’.

We can certainly be optimistic about the increasing numbers of women involved in the region’s governance. We can also report a positive cultural change in many (but not all) organisations towards greater openness and transparency. This time, unlike in 2000, no-one challenged our right to ask for information about their governance (although not all responded). There is now more information on websites and a more thoughtful approach to appointments. Unlike 2000 – and the ‘rise of the quangocracy’ - there is not much evident public concern about appointments made through party political patronage.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of scope for improving governance in the North East. We have pointed to the problems of centralised government and the powerlessness of the region’s MPs and local councils. Devolution to LEPs and Combined Authorities has been very limited and in the northern part of the region has had limited success. The situation is quite

different from the era of New Labour back in 2000, when the region had both a stronger voice and greater resources. Not only have the previous regional institutions been disbanded, but so has the North East as a region, despite the creation of (relatively weak) sub-regional and pan-regional arrangements.

Relatively little can be done within the North East to strengthen its position in relation to a centralised system – apart from accepting the small, perhaps token, devolution that the Government has offered. Longer term, however, we might look again at constitutional changes, including perhaps a new federal settlement for the regions of England?

However, organisations within the region could do much more to strengthen and open up governance. It needs to be stressed that there are many public-spirited people, some paid and some not, who are prepared to get involved in the governance of public services. But it cannot be good for democracy or for the quality of decision-making that the region is run by a narrow range of people not properly representative of those they serve, a situation where ‘ordinary citizens’ are largely excluded from the structures and processes of governance. It is not surprising that many people feel alienated from governance when the people who run things are from a narrow group: pale and stale (but nowadays both female and male) and, predominantly middle-class offering professional expertise drawn from a narrow range of skills in such areas as finance, accountancy, law and HR.

We would argue that these are the priorities that need to be debated - and acted on:

- People in the North East (and elsewhere) need to know more about who does what, who is in charge, how governance works and where power lies. Our research should help to improve knowledge and understanding of governance in the North East. Access to information through education is a prerequisite for improving participation, including improving turnouts in local elections and encouraging and enabling people to get involved in governance. There is much to be said for good civic education for everyone – and there is a need for wide-ranging and inclusive discussion about how that can be provided. The Government's recent decision to drop the A Level in Citizenship could be reviewed, while the GCSE syllabus in the same subject could focus more on local government and involvement.
- All organisations need to look critically at the diversity, or lack of it, on their boards. Policies are not enough. The lack of people from BAME backgrounds and absence of disabled people on many boards is indefensible, and needs to be remedied. The underrepresentation of younger people - especially on local councils - is also a major issue that needs to be tackled.
- The overrepresentation of middle class professionals and underrepresentation of local people who use public services needs to be challenged and changed. Organisations need to monitor and review diversity and then take action to become inclusive and representative of different communities of identity and interest. They also need to consider what diversity means, how members and representatives from these communities can be specifically supported, and look at diversity in broader terms, for example in relation to sexuality, gender identity, membership of political parties,

educational background and so on. There is ample evidence that diverse perspectives improve the quality of debate and decision-making.

- All organisations should have a critical look at what information they provide to the public and how they provide it – especially in relation to governance. There are websites that can serve as examples of better practice – and that give the impression of an organisation wanting to be open and transparent, and seeking to communicate effectively. Many councils, for example, publish huge amounts of information on their websites and make an effort to make websites clear and easy to navigate. At a minimum, all websites should have the following information about governance: profiles of the people on boards and declarations of their interests and remuneration; up-to-date minutes, agendas and papers for meetings; and information on how someone can become a board member.
- Vacancies for board members should be advertised. As a matter of principle, all organisations should conduct as much of their business in public as possible and actively invite the public and the media to attend their meetings.
- National Government and National Bodies also have a responsibility to promote diversity - both in terms of legally requiring organisations to provide regular data on disability for example, and in terms of ensuring fair representation – where appropriate, through affirmative action.
  - The Scottish Government is currently discussing national legislative action on ensuring a 50:50 gender split on public bodies. Recent research from The Fawcett Society on more inclusive local government recommends a number of changes, including: term limits for councillors to aid turnover; reasonable adjustment policies for disabled councillors; allowing remote attendance at council meetings and using technology to support inclusion; introducing maternity, paternity and parental leave entitlements for councillors; adopting a requirement for gender balanced leadership; and permitting all-women shortlists for metro mayor elections.
  - In the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the Mayor, Andy Burnham, has gained agreement that for all future meetings of the GMCA both men and women would be represented from across the 10 local boroughs that make up Greater Manchester. Hence, appointed portfolio leaders have been asked to nominate assistant leads of a different gender to ensure balanced representation in meetings and around decision-making.
- There are also a number of participatory and deliberative techniques to try and ensure wider involvement in decision-making beyond the 'usual suspects'. These could involve wider use of voting via 'digital democracy', citizens' juries or assemblies, and in relation to board appointments, the use of random or lottery selection.

- There is also a strong argument for England and Wales joining Scotland and Northern Ireland in using the Single Transferable Vote method of voting in local council elections.
- More controversially, there may be a case for offering more opportunities to directly elect those who take key decisions in our name. Apart from elected councils/mayors and PCCs, voters across the North East region have little direct control over decisions on services in Health, Education, and Housing for example.

To conclude, we hope that this research helps question assumptions about how things are done and encourages organisations to do things differently - and better.

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### The Authors

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**Keith Shaw** is Professor of Social Sciences at Northumbria University. A Northumbrian by birth, he was educated at the Duke's Grammar School, Alnwick, and at the Universities of Hull and Manchester. Over the last 35 years, his research has covered urban and regional governance, public services reform, neighbourhood renewal, and devolution within the UK. He is Secretary of Benwell Hill Cricket Club and sits on the Management Committee of the North East Premier Cricket League.

**Sue Regan** is a researcher at Northumbria University, after a 30-year career in North East local government and the voluntary sector. She has worked in both policy and practice, across community, partnership and regeneration remits, focused on equality and involvement. She studied at Newcastle Polytechnic and later gained a Masters in Urban Policy at Northumbria University. She is currently completing her PhD study, which examines local political representation and gender.