

LGR: how a data led approach creates new opportunities to support vulnerable households and keep services local

Wednesday 5 November 2025

Housekeeping

- Audio check
- Please ask questions throughout
- Short survey
- Aim to finish by 11.45
- Slides and recording will follow
- Connect with us on LinkedIn and X ([@policy_practice](#))

We empower people

Policy

 **24.1 billion**

~~£23 billion~~ of support is unclaimed each year

[Read our analysis](#)

Practice

Smart products help our clients efficiently close this unclaimed support gap

[View our Better Off platform](#)



Today's speakers



Emma Richardson
Senior Manager, Specialist
Services – Poverty Lead,
Northumberland County
Council



Max Taylor
Strategy and Policy
Officer, Surrey County
Council



Sam Fathers
Head of Commercial
Development
(South and Wales)
Policy in Practice



Karine Tollari
Growth Marketing
Manager,
Policy in Practice

- **Welcome and Housekeeping remarks**

Karine Tollari, Policy in Practice

- **“Shaping Surrey’s future: Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation”**

Max Taylor, Strategy and Policy Officer, Surrey County Council

- **“How a data led approach creates new opportunities to support vulnerable households and keep services local”**

Emma Richardson, Senior Manager, Specialist Services – Poverty Lead, Northumberland County Council

- **“Using Policy in Practice tools to minimise the side effects of local government reorganisation”**

Sam Fathers, Head of Commercial Development (South and Wales), Policy in Practice

- **Q&A and discussion**

What is LGR?

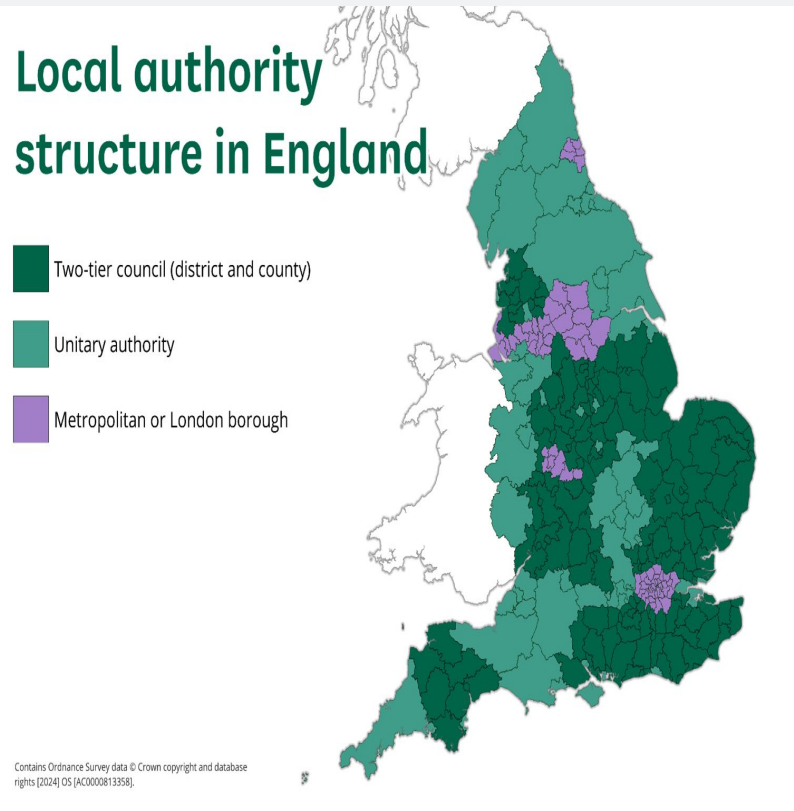
Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is the flagship local authority announcement of the Government and was set out in the Devolution white paper

All areas of England will convert to Unitary Authorities

Additional Mayoral Strategic Authorities akin with West Midlands, North Yorkshire etc.

Ultimately less local authorities with statutory powers, and less elected members, for larger geographical footprints

Strategic / Combined Authorities to gain additional devolved powers

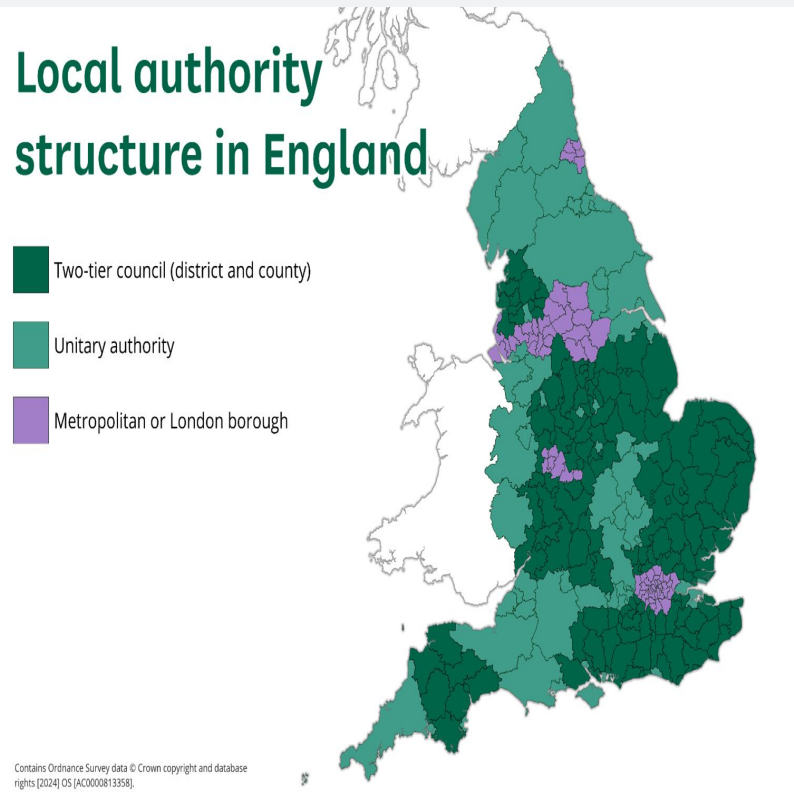


What is a Strategic Authority?

Strategic Authorities (SA) – partnerships that bring together local authorities across a large geography.

Three categories of SA are proposed:

- **Foundation (FSA)** – automatically including non-mayoral Combined Authorities or County Combined Authorities, and other local authorities designated as a SA without a mayor.
- **Mayoral (MSA)** – Greater London Authority, all Mayoral Combined Authorities and all Mayoral County Combined Authorities.
- **Established (ESA)** – Those who meet eligibility criteria, will unlock further devolution, such as Integrated Settlements.



Where are the Government priorities for new authorities?

- New councils should have a **population of 500,00** – there may be exceptions on a case-by-case basis (eg. Isle of Wight)
- **High quality and sustainable public services** to citizens and communities prioritised
- Proactive and innovative approach to **neighbourhood involvement and community governance** to empower residents
- All councils in an area to **collaborate on developing unitary proposals** in the best interests of a whole area, rather than producing competing proposals
- Bring about **changes as swiftly as possible - target by end of parliament**
-

Where is LRG taking place?

Immediate (Phase 2) in:-

- Norfolk
- Suffolk
- Greater Essex
- Surrey
- East Sussex
- West Sussex (inc. Brighton)
- Hampshire (inc. Isle of Wight)

Phase 3:-

- Devon
- Kent
- Oxfordshire & West Berkshire
- Berkshire
- Gloucestershire
- Hertfordshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Leicestershire (inc. Rutland)
- Lincolnshire
- Derbyshire

Reorganisation map

Explore LGC's reorganisation map to find out how many interim plans have been submitted to the government and what the options are.



Shaded red areas already being taken over by government

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Max Taylor

Strategy and Policy Officer,
Surrey County Council

Shaping Surrey's future:
Devolution and Local
Government Reorganisation



SHAPING SURREY'S FUTURE



Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

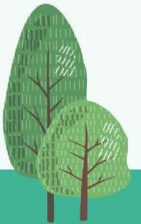
Policy in Practice – LGR Briefing

November 2025



What will be covered

- Background to our LGR Journey
- Next Steps
- Role of SCC during LGR
- Neighbourhood Area Committees
- Using LIFT during LGR



Local Government Reorganisation

- In the White Paper, Government announced a **programme of reorganisation for all two-tier local government areas in England** (and unitary councils where there is evidence of failure)
- **Phased delivery**, taking account of where re-organisation can **unlock devolution**, where areas want to **proceed at pace or where wider failings can be addressed**. Reorganisation should not delay devolution and devolution plans should complement LGR
- Government will agree with local leaders the support they need to develop proposals and implement new structures. This could **include postponing local elections** where it will help smooth the transition process



Pathways set out by government

Track 1 - The Devolution Priority Programme

- Mayoral Strategic Authorities by 2026
- Submit LGR proposals by Autumn 2025

Track 2 - Areas who need reorganisation to unlock devolution

- Submit LGR proposals by 9 May 2025
- Shadow Unitary Authority(ies) elections May 2026
- New unitary council(s) in full effect in 2027, enabling a Strategic Authority, with Mayoral elections to follow

Track 3 – If not on the accelerated programme

- LGR proposals submitted to Autumn deadline (without an election delay)
- Shadow elections in 2027 and new unitary council(s) come into effect 2028 with the timetable for Mayoral Strategic Authorities less clear

5 February Announcement

Confirmed
Surrey has been
**selected for the
accelerated
track (Track 2)**

Government
**invited all
councils in
Surrey to submit
a proposal** for
Local
Government
Reorganisation

Interim LGR plan
due **21 March
2025**, and a final
LGR proposal
due **9 May 2025**

Government Criteria for LGR Proposals

- Whether the proposal achieves for the whole of the area concerned **the establishment of a single tier of local government**;
- Whether the councils are the right size to **achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks**;
- Whether the unitary structures prioritise the **delivery of high quality and sustainable public services** to citizens;
- Whether councils in the area have sought to work together to come to a view that **meets local needs** and is **informed by local views**;
- Whether new unitary structures **support devolution arrangements**; and
- Whether new unitary structures enable **stronger community engagement** and deliver genuine opportunity for **neighbourhood empowerment**.



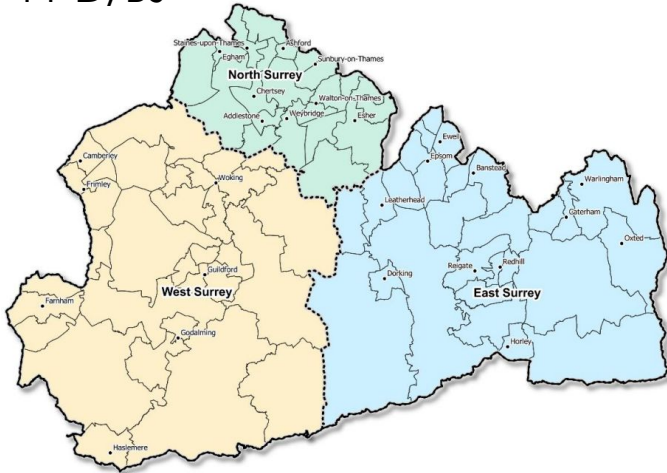
Proposals for a single-tier of local government in Surrey

Government took forward two proposals for consideration for LGR in Surrey



Three unitary proposal

Supported by 9 out of the 11 D/Bs



Two unitary proposal

Supported by SCC, Mole Valley, and Elmbridge



Government decision on LGR in Surrey



On 28 October, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to all Surrey councils confirming:

- **Creation of two unitary councils:** The Secretary of State is minded to proceed with the creation of two new unitary councils in Surrey on an East/West split.
- **Support for Woking's debt:** There is an in-principle commitment to repay £500 million of Woking Borough Council's debt in 2026/27, with further support under review.
- **Intent to establish a Surrey Strategic Authority:** Government reiterated a commitment to work with partners across Surrey, including new unitary authorities once established, to establish a strategic authority for Surrey.

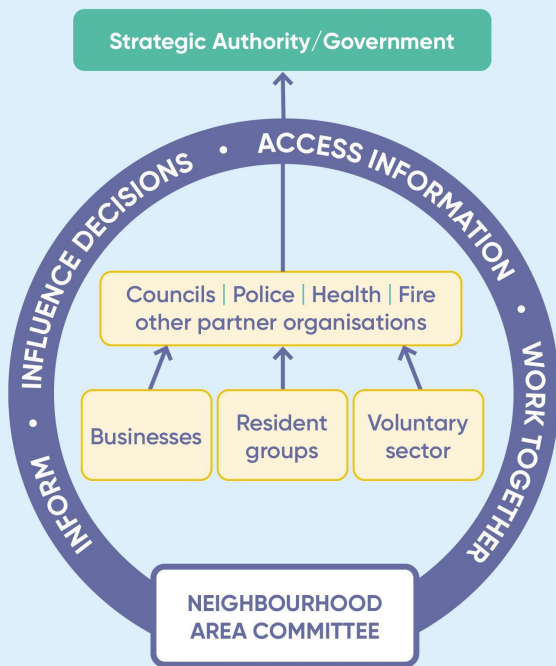


LGR TIMELINE



Neighbourhood Area Committees: Pilots

How Neighbourhood Area Committees will work



To find out the latest on Neighbourhood Area Committees, visit: surrey.gov.uk/communities

Four Neighbourhood Area Committee pilots are being actively developed in:

- North Tandridge
- East Elmbridge
- Dorking and The Villages
- Farnham

Developed with input from district and borough councils and other local partners from health, police, and voluntary sectors.

Purpose and Focus:

- **Understand** key local issues
- Agree **priorities** and champion **collaborative action**
- Promote **preventative activity**
- Support **thriving** communities
- **Act as advisory** bodies (not constituted)
- Supported by a range of **engagement tools**



Role of Surrey County Council during LGR



- **Consult and co-operate** with district and boroughs and with the shadow authorities (once established) to secure the economic, effective, efficient and timely transfer of the county council's and those council's functions, property, rights and liabilities.
- Ensure all services are **fully prepared for transition**, to **ensure the new authorities are safe and legal** from vesting day onward. This includes bringing together key information (e.g. budgets, assets, contracts and staffing) and preparing implementation plans.
- **Continue delivering core services and statutory duties** until vesting day. This includes setting a balanced budget for 2026/27, maintaining performance oversight, and ensuring seamless continuity of business-as-usual operations to end Surrey well.



Using LIFT during LGR

- Surrey authorities will **continue to utilise LIFT throughout the transition period**, building on the success of previous benefit uptake campaigns, including Free School Meals, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, and Healthy Start.
- We are exploring ways to integrate LIFT into **insight packs for our NAC pilot areas**, supporting the development of locally tailored priorities.
- LIFT may also be used to complement our internal datasets, helping us identify patterns of service demand and to potentially inform **decisions around service disaggregation, inform budget setting** for the new authorities and **the design of future welfare offers**.



Emma Richardson

Senior Manager, Specialist Services
– Poverty Lead,
Northumberland County Council

**How a data led approach creates
new opportunities to support
vulnerable households and keep
services local**

policyinpractice.co.uk



How a data led approach creates new opportunities to support vulnerable households and keep services local

Policy In Practice webinar 4/11/2025

Emma Richardson
Senior Manager, Specialist Services – Poverty Lead
Northumberland County Council

A little about Northumberland

- Northumberland covers an area of 5078 km², 90% of this is rural, with a population of around 325,000.
- 52% of the population live in 5% of the county!
- No city, motorway, university, but key market towns incredible coastlines, castles, countryside, and history
- Unique challenges including our geography, older and ageing population, public transport – we border 5 counties, including Scottish borders!
- A lot of hospitality, agriculture, seasonal work, challenges with uptakes and access to information and support.
- Partnership is key
- 6 to 1 – Unitary Authority since April 2009
- Part of North East Combined Authority (Since May 2024)
- Previously part of North of Tyne Combined Authority (Nov 2018-May 2024)
- One of 10 LAs working on national Test, Learn, Grow reform programme



A little bit about my role:

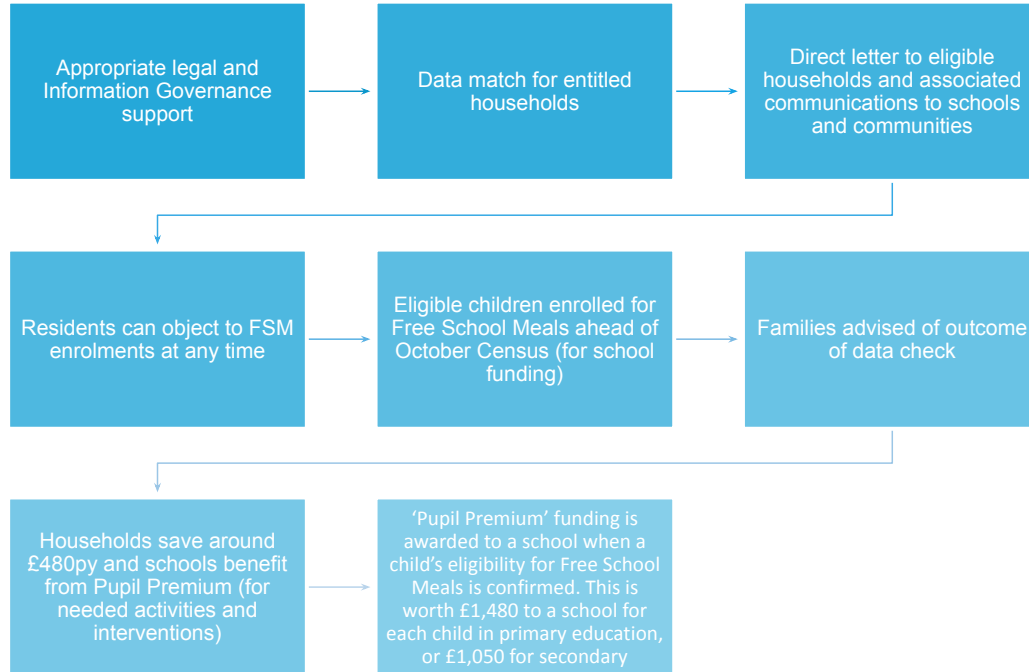
Bio: A Senior Manager leading on Poverty at Northumberland County Council, Emma enjoys working across the council and its system partners; “leaning in” as a critical friend to help get the best from policy, resources, and opportunities available locally, regionally and nationally. At its core this includes hardship supports and targeted intervention, but also seeding activity to test new ways of working in and with communities developing sustainable and ambitious approaches to shared challenges.

Key in all areas of Emma’s work is spending time forming relationships, learning from others, and stretching to new models of cross sector workforce.

- Unique role – based in Children's Services
- Data led – from start to impact
- Community and place focused
- Ambitious and accountable
- Anything from income maximisation campaigns, Holiday Activity and Food Programme, Household Support Fund planning, corporate transformation, community capacity building, grants and commissioning, health equity, test and learn....
- Eyes on long term, sustainable goals.

Data led campaigns – it's a journey!

eg FSM initial campaign



Always learning!

Legal and Information Governance with you from the start!

Be robust with data checks – and learn from insights

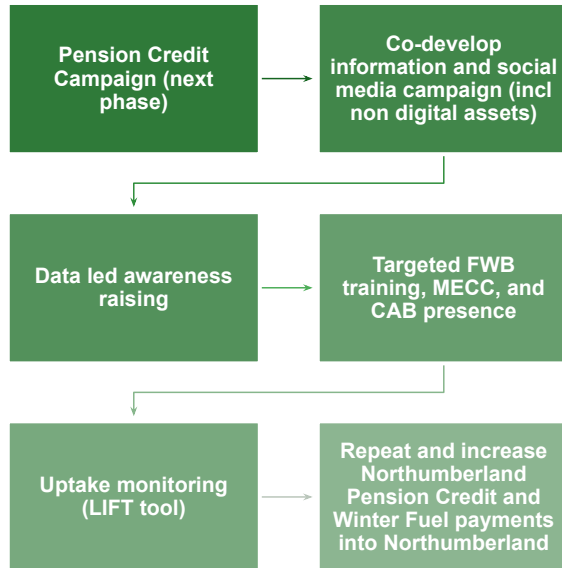
People act on receipt of the letter – capacity heavy!

Yr 2 applied school census data

Income of more than £2m in two campaigns

Two tiered – data led place and household campaigns

Pension Credit / Winter Fuel awareness campaign



Winter Fuel Payments & Pension Credit

The rules for receiving a Winter Fuel Payment have changed

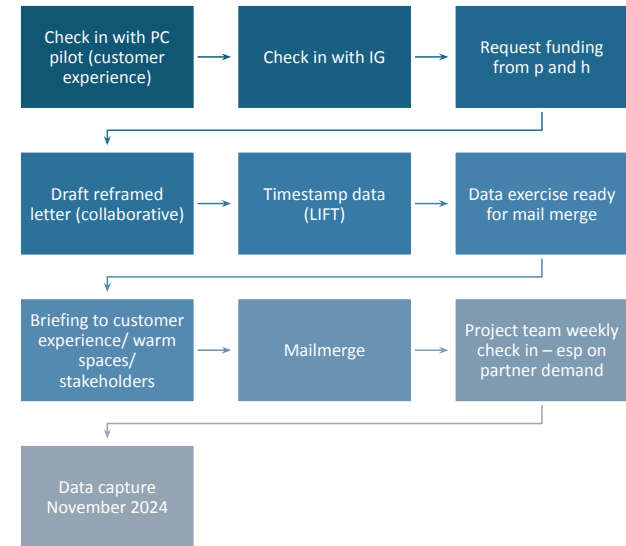
Check if you're eligible for Pension Credit today

Contact Age UK Northumberland or Citizens Advice Northumberland for a free and confidential chat

citizens advice Northumberland County Council ageUK Northumberland

The poster features a photograph of an elderly couple smiling. It includes logos for Citizens Advice, Northumberland County Council, and Age UK Northumberland.

Direct letters – Pension Credit



Beyond Income Maximisation campaigns: Changing how we work

Did you spot our superpower?

- **Partnerships and places**, local knowledge sharing – recognising how people behave in their own lives
- Data led positioning of info and support eg Warmer Northumberland Partnership
- Capacity and trust building – across places, sectors, organisations, and directorates!
- Joining up resources – rarely is this work linear – and collective impact

Data data data – asking, joining, sharing, quality assurance, governance, usage, insights, learning

- Eg Good Level of Development
- Eg Communities First

Confidence in our data, gives us robust actions, co-development gives us surety in our reach



KEEPING YOUR HOME WARM & ENERGY EFFICIENT

Don't be left in the cold, we're here to help!

Whether you're a homeowner, renting, or supporting a loved one, there is support available to help you reduce energy bills and improve your comfort.

✓ Energy Advice
Free, independent and expert advice on how to reduce energy and save money, including help maximising income, understanding bills, switching tariffs, and how a smart meter might benefit your home.

🏠 Home Energy Checks
Free Home Energy Checks - to assess how you might improve the energy efficiency of your home, and help with draught proofing and radiator reflectors. Tips to stay warm and save energy.

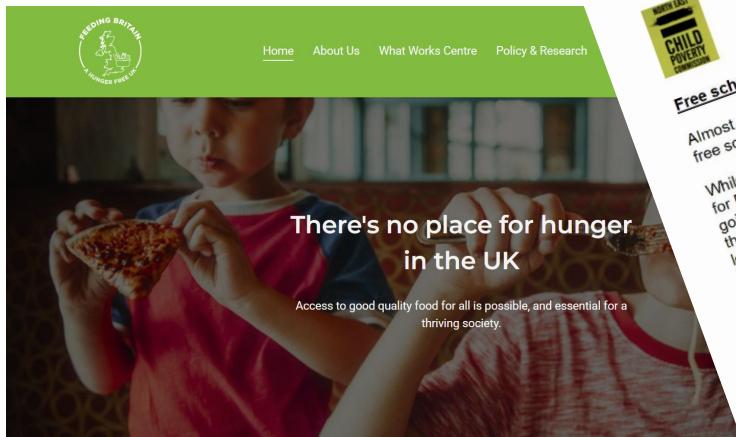
💰 Financial Help
Contact us for more information on Warm Home Discount, Winter Fuel, and Cold Weather Payments, Energy Grants, and local schemes.

🔧 Home Improvements
Home energy improvements advice about energy measures, such as for insulation or heating repairs, is available. We can help you understand what's available, and how to apply.

 The Warmer Northumberland Partnership includes Citizens Advice Northumberland, Age UK Northumberland, Community Action Northumberland (CAN), Glendale Gateway Trust, Karbon Homes, and Northumberland County Council. Referrals can be made through

Opportunities – how can we be local, regional, and national

- Be clear on the common denominator!
- Shared ambitions and outcomes – household incomes, growth, best use of resources.
- Efficient implementation – strengths based and impactful
- Active regional networks and relationships – eg NECPC, NECA, LA7
- Push with evidence for what is needed – eg sharing
- Use data to tell the story – (and be ready to listen!)



Free school meals and auto-enrolment in the North East

Almost one in three school-aged pupils in the North East are eligible and registered for free school meals (FSM), the highest proportion of anywhere in England.¹ Whilst all English regions have seen a significant increase in the number of FSMs over the last nine years, the North East has experienced the steepest increase, going from just under one in five of all school-aged pupils (18.4% or 71,300) in 2013/14 to 31.2% or 124,294 in 2023/24.² These figures – which are marked as local authority areas³ – do not include college students (aged 16-19) enrolled in Further Education.

Despite the significant increase in the number of pupils in the region eligible for FSMs, the North East Child Poverty Commission (NECPC) has been extremely concerned that the current threshold for means-tested FSMs is too high. Research and ongoing conversations with schools, colleges, childcare providers, carers, and local authority/VCS colleagues across the region, indicates that some 900,000 children in poverty across England are excluded under the current narrow criteria.⁴

Free school meals and auto-enrolment in the North East



Key takeaways

- Show off! Document and celebrate wins, and share them along with those mistakes.
 - Show up! Support colleagues and neighbours, and learn from them.
 - Pause and reflect - Be ready to be flexible in approach but uncompromising on impact.
 - Join in! Contribute to collective impact – we can do more together - prioritise this!
-
- Remember it's never perfect!

Reassurance! Always room for great work – be visible, demonstrate real impact, and aim high – don't be passive, make sure we shape working policies and investment!

**We've never been in times like this, with challenges like this, or with opportunities, data and tech like this, so clearly we need to figure out how to do things we've never done.
That's worth going to work for!**

Thank you!

emma.richardson@northumberland.gov.uk

Poll

What's your biggest concern about how reorganisation will affect local service delivery?

1. Losing sight of who needs help most
2. Delays in coordinating across teams and agencies
3. Difficulty designing targeted, high-impact interventions
4. Data silos and reduced insights into local needs
5. Other (Add it in the questions panel on the right)

Sam Fathers

Head of Business Development
Public Sector (South and Wales)
Policy in Practice

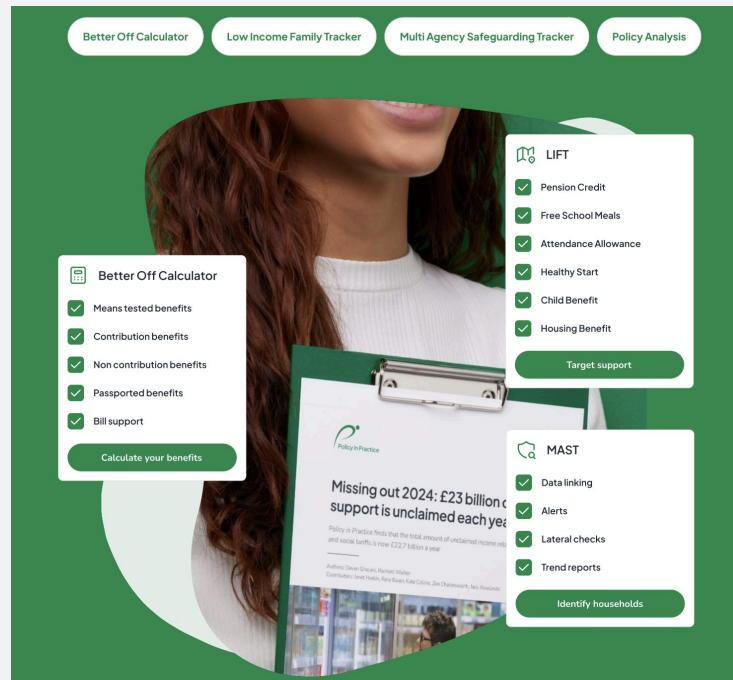
Using Policy in Practice tools to
maximise opportunities from
local government reorganisation

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Better Off Platform: better together

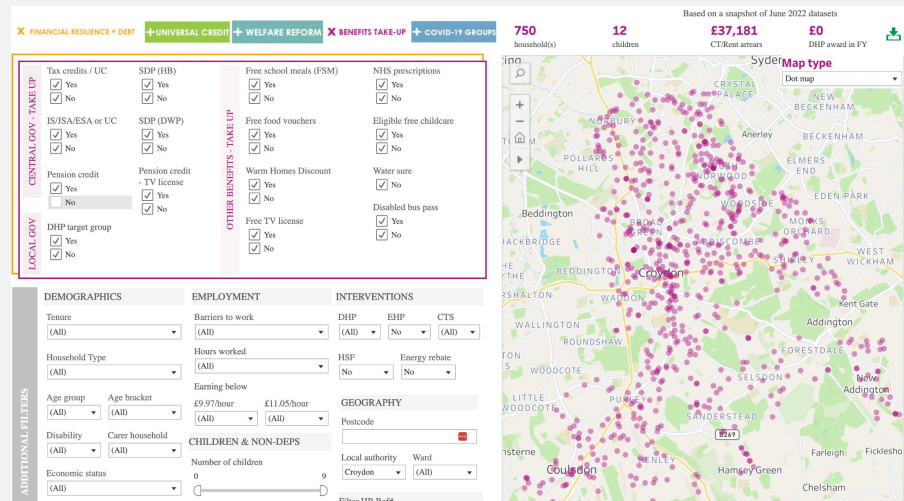
- Policy in Practice's Better Off Platform combines all our tools together (LIFT, Calculator, CTR modelling, MAST)
- Identify, engage, track and award all through one platform
- One integrated platform across departments and campaigns - making things easier for officers and residents



-
- Take up campaigns**
- ✓ Pension Credit
 - ✓ Free School Meals
 - ✓ Attendance Allowance
 - ✓ Healthy Start
 - ✓ Child Benefit
 - ✓ Housing Benefit
- Target support**

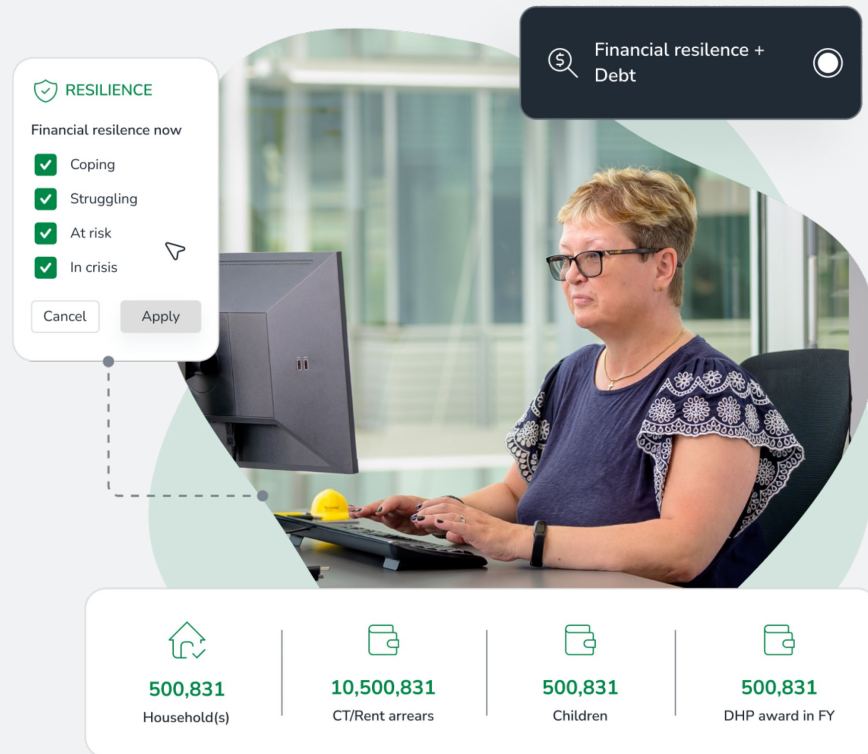
LIFT: Keeping services local through LGR

- LIFT keeps services local by showing the areas with the highest need for resource, and those not served by council services
- Easily build a localities approach based on data, demand and insights
- Combine data from multiple systems and providers seamlessly and without disruption
- Identify down to individual households those missing out on benefits, in need of support or at high risk of homelessness
- Keep carers caring and maximise incomes to reduce ASC bills



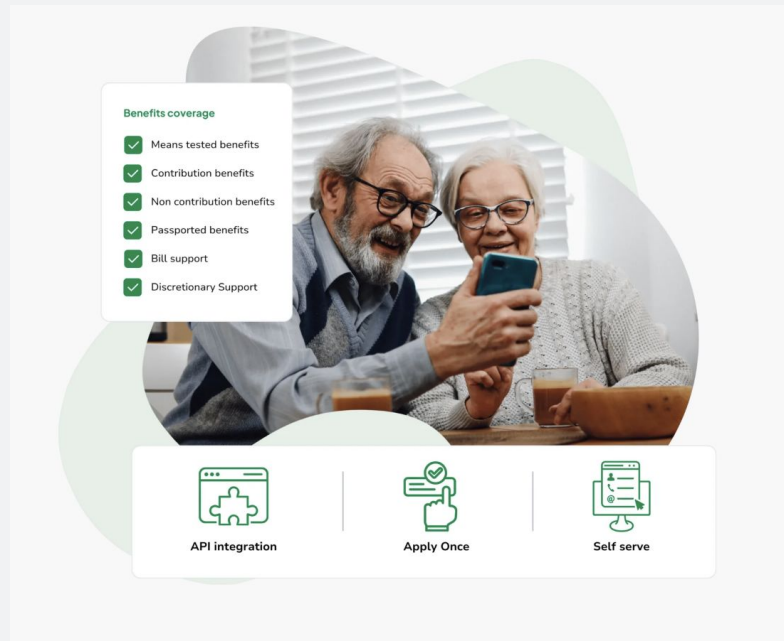
LIFT: Data insights for Combined Authorities & Counties (and Countries)

- LIFT aggregated dashboards in use across tiers of Local Government & in devolved Wales
- Ability to make informed decisions on funding and priorities from a single data source
- Makes grant applications simpler
- See data ahead of time in new councils for planning



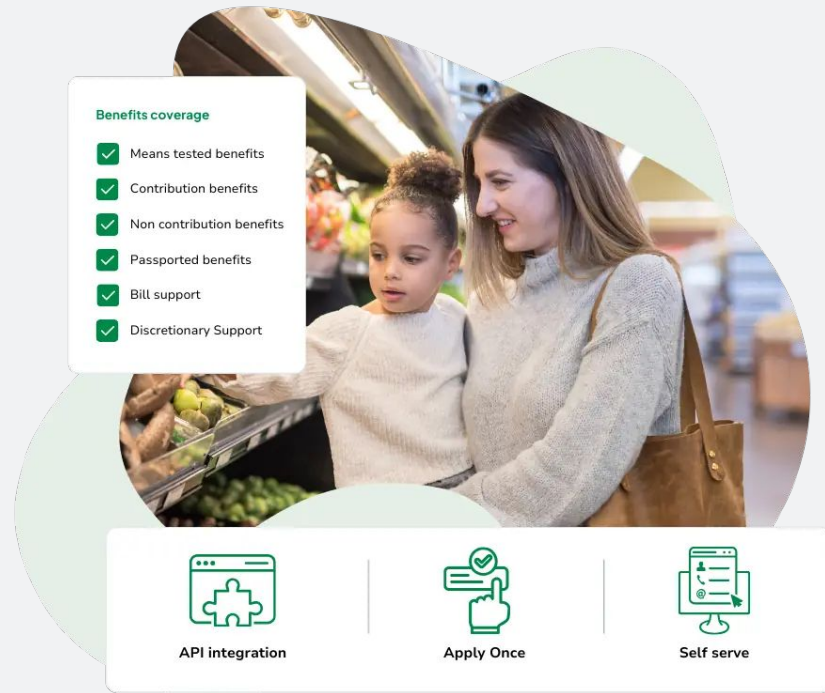
Campaign manager: combining tools & removing effort

- Campaign Manager works through LIFT and can also allow for wider integration with the Better Off Calculator and Apply Once
- Identify households in LIFT that are eligible for different benefits or support
- Integrate with Better Off Calculator and Apply Once to target DHPs as well as Social Tariffs
- Pre-populate the Better Off Calculator with data from LIFT to save resident's time
- Campaigns enacted faster, more effectively and with less officer resource



Calculator: Identify, Maximise, Apply & Award

- Our Better Off Calculator helps residents and officers navigate the changes to local schemes during LGR - whilst maximising uptake of national benefits & social tariffs
- Apply Once makes it quicker and simpler to apply for all local schemes all at once
- Award directly from the BOC through payments integrations*
- Standardise housing applications & prioritise TA move on based on affordability
- LIFT2CALC and Indicator make calculations faster



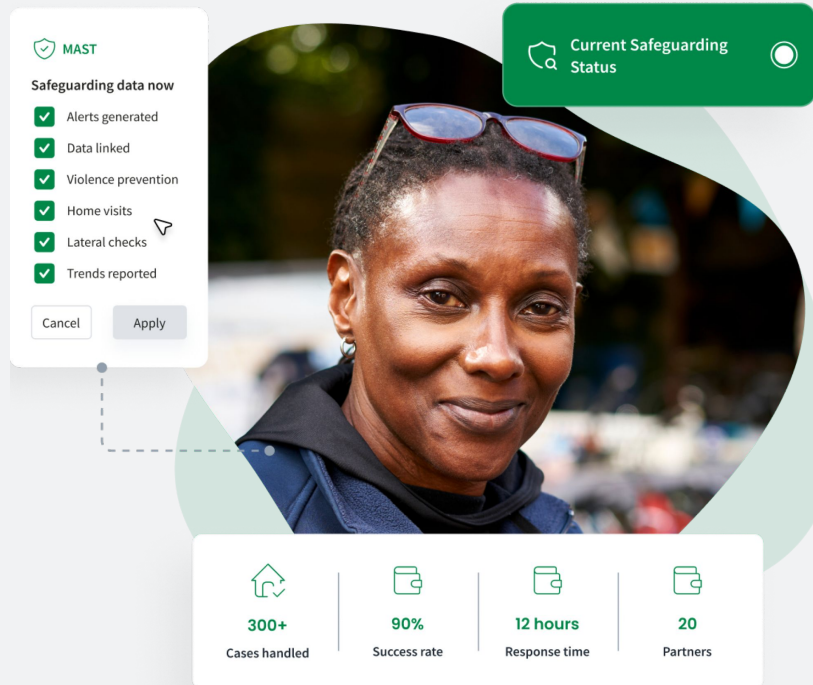
CTR: Merging schemes and measuring impact

- Our recent CTR report and fireside chat is available now through our website.
- Our team of experts have experience in comparing and combining schemes as part of previous council restructures
- Measure the cost and impact of different models across new council boundaries effortlessly
- Work across all (and multiple) data providers



MAST: Multi Agency Safeguarding Tracker

- Finally we have our Multi Agency Safeguarding Tracker - which combines safeguarding data from multiple sources
- Used to automatically alert safeguarding partners across sectors and geographies
- Identify vulnerable households earlier, and keep track of cases with automated alerts



What's next

If you would like to find out about unclaimed benefits by area, collaborate with us or ask more questions, feel free to [book a chat with us](#) using this QR code or this [link](#)



Register for an upcoming webinar:



Online Webinar

Preventing debt and homelessness this winter: impact case studies from leading organisations



Online Webinar

Review of 2025 in policy and practice:
From data to impact



Online Webinar

Overcoming the data disconnect in
safeguarding

Q&A



Thank you to our guest speakers

Emma Richardson, Senior Manager, Specialist Services – Poverty Lead,
Northumberland County Council

Max Taylor, Strategy and Policy Officer at Surrey County Council

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