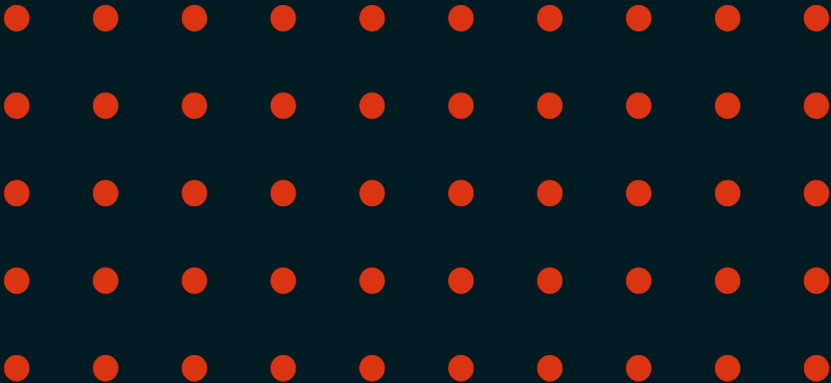




TYNE & WEAR CITIZENS

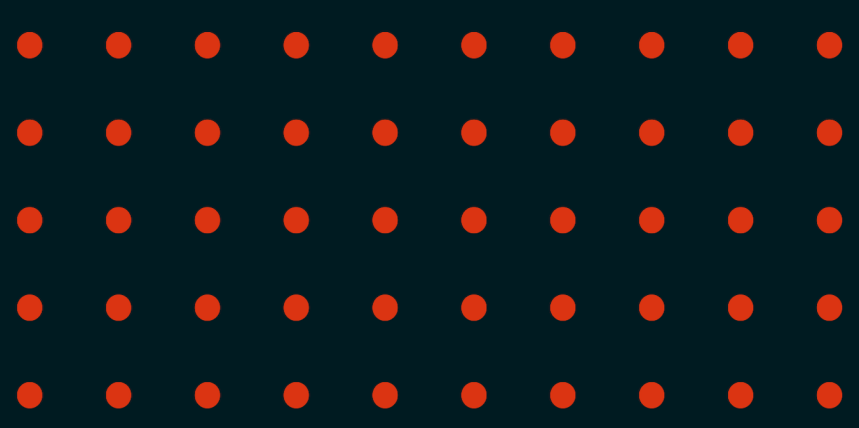
NORTH EAST DEVOLUTION
MANIFESTO 2024





Tyne & Wear
CITIZENS

PART OF
CITIZENSUK



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BRINGING
COMMUNITIES
together

INTRODUCTION

Tyne & Wear Citizens is part of Citizens UK, the UK's biggest, most diverse, and most effective people-powered alliance. We bring together everyday people and local organisations to build a better, fairer society.

Community organising is about bringing people together to win change. This means building community-led solutions to big and small problems, that work for everyone.

We know everyday people have the ability to shape the world around them and together, we put the power back into people's hands to hold those responsible to account.

We believe that through developing local leaders, we can drive nationwide change and create community-led solutions to big and small problems.

We build positive working relationships between communities, elected power-holders and businesses, making sure everyone is heard and no one is left out.

Across the UK, over 500 member institutions including charities, education institutions, faith organisations and trade unions work together for leadership development, the strengthening of civil society and social justice.

In the North East, the 35 members of Tyne & Wear Citizens undertake listening campaigns involving 1000s conversations to find out what's putting pressure on our communities, what we have in common and then how we can organise together to find solutions to some of the injustices being faced.

Since 2016, these issues have included problems in housing, the environment, hate crime, mental-ill health, poverty, and racism. To date, we've increased the number of real Living Wage employers from 30 to over 270, including the creation of two Living Wage Cities – Sunderland and Newcastle; supported young people to improve mental health services and worked with the North of Tyne Mayor to win reduced bus fares, with the 'Get Round for a Pound' scheme; established a hate crime charter across 5 public transport providers; improved local parks and much more.

As we undertook a deep listening campaign across our membership last year, we heard about struggles to cope with the cost of living crisis, struggles faced within the education system and a housing crisis that makes housing unaffordable and often uninhabitable.

Our region can often seem broken, but as Tyne & Wear Citizens, we believe that action leads to hope, which is why we have developed agendas that we want to work on together with the new North East Mayor and Combined Authority.

We believe that our joint efforts and energy would help fix some of our region's most intractable problems. We believe that these solutions, and the work of community organising, can help bring more justice to the North East.

THE JOURNEY TO THIS MANIFESTO



BROAD-BASED ORGANISING

All of our work is rooted in our broad-based alliance. We have 35 dues paying member organisations. Members are charities, education institutions, faith organisations and trade unions and are working together across difference to build power and make change.



LISTENING

From December 2022-November 2023, we ran listening campaigns across our member organisations, asking thousands of people about what was putting pressure on them, their families, households and communities. Through 121 conversations and house meetings we listened to 1000s people. We listen to: find new leaders wanting to take action, build our relational power which gives us the ability to make change, broaden our interests and build solidarity.



ISSUES WORKSHOPS

Hundreds of people who had been a part of the listening joined campaign teams and shared stories, starting to turn the big problems we had identified into worthwhile and winnable issues that we could do something about. Policy experts and funders were invited to help provide context, insight and ideas but decisions about which ideas to take forward are made by leaders from member organisations.



DELEGATES ASSEMBLY

In November 2023, we hosted a manifesto workshop with over 250 people. Teams of leaders shared their priorities and got consent from members for the development of proposals that we wanted the North East Mayor to work with us on. This is our own democracy in action.



VOTER REGISTRATION

During Voter Registration Week in March 2024, member organisations were encouraged to register members of their organisation and educate them as to the changes around voting and the need for ID. Members have trained their leaders to engage in conversations about voting and how to support others to register to vote. They have accredited with Citizens UK as Voter Registration Champions, as part of a national initiative to get 300,000 people registered to vote, across the UK, in this crucial year for our democracy.



MAYORAL ASSEMBLY

On **22 April 2024**, thousands of us will join in person to put our priorities to Mayoral Candidates.



VOTE

On **2 May 2024**, we will vote for the North East Mayor, having built relationships with candidates and sought their commitment to work with us on our priorities



WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE MAY 2024-APRIL 2028

We will spend the next four years working with the North East Mayor and the North East Combined Authority to make our manifesto a reality.

COST OF LIVING

Since 2022 steep rises in fuel and food prices have disproportionately impacted low income communities in the North East, many who already struggle to make ends meet. More than one third of all babies, children and young people in our region are living in poverty.

Wages have failed to keep up with rising costs resulting in high levels of in-work poverty. In our region, two thirds of children growing up in poverty come from working families, we're experiencing much steeper increases in in-work child poverty than that in other parts of the UK.

This was highlighted by the North East Child Poverty Commission's, "No Time To Wait". The report emphasises the need to tackle child poverty through the Real Living Wage accreditation and by making the North East Combined Authority area a Living Wage Region.

The real Living Wage campaign was born out of Citizens UK organising, and there are now over 270 employers in the region who pay their staff a real Living Wage, based on the cost of living. These employers are doing the right thing for their employees and the local economy - but we must grow the number of accreditations to better tackle in-work poverty, ensuring workers earn enough for a decent standard of life.

Additionally, there are many in our region who are unable to work due to disabilities and caring responsibilities. A series of cuts and freezes to benefits has left many in destitution and their lives are restricted due to transport costs in our region. We also hear of too many people sanctioned because they can't afford transport to fulfil the obligations of the benefits system.

As this most recent cost of living crisis continues, we want people in our region to thrive rather than barely survive



I love my job but I'm exhausted and in pain. I need surgery on my knee but can't afford to take time off to get it sorted. I live from pay day to pay day,

The hardest bit is the long hours. I need extra shifts to get by. I'm contracted for 30 hours but regularly do over 45. At the end of the day I am in agony. Being paid a real Living Wage to do the job I love would make a big difference

BECCA, SPACE 4, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

OUR TRACK RECORD

Since 2017, we have been campaigning to increase the number of real Living Wage employers in the region. As a result, the numbers have gone from 30 accredited employers to over 270.

We have won thousands of pay rises for workers and that figure keeps growing. One of our latest accreditations, at Newcastle City Council, has led to £6 million in increased wages to low paid workers in the city.

We started our campaigning with the ambition of accrediting a University, a Local Authority and a sports venue. We are delighted that we now have two Universities; two Local Authorities - Sunderland City Council and Newcastle City Council; Newcastle United Football Club as well as other accredited anchor organisations such as NHS Trusts and housing associations and two Living Wage Cities, Sunderland and Newcastle.

WE ASK THE NORTH EAST MAYOR TO

- Commit **time, money and resources to work with us to make the North East a Living Wage Region**, accrediting your new office as a Living Wage employer and co-chairing the North East Living Wage Region Action Team
- **Call on National Government to ensure all adult social care workers in England are paid at least the real Living Wage**, as a step towards ensuring that all care workers are paid at least the real Living Wage
- **Make a joint cross-party call with regional mayors to the next UK Government** that sufficient funding and guidance is provided to **ensure that all publicly funded social care jobs in England are paid the real Living Wage**, including sleep-in shifts and appropriate travel time. A real Living Wage for social care workers has been achieved in Wales and Scotland. This is the first step to ensuring all social care workers can be paid at least the real Living Wage in England



- Set a clear vision that **all Mayoral planning powers, asset management and procurement plans require the real Living Wage and encourage the take up of Living Hours**, ensuring that real Living Wage and Living Hours are embedded in procurement strategies
- Ensure that **people on means tested benefits receive free public transport across the region**, so that they can better access **essential services and those that enable a decent quality of life**, ensuring that those on the lowest incomes in our communities thrive rather than survive
- To work with local authorities and charities to **ensure consistent provision of crisis support across the region**
- **Call on National Government in support of an Essential Guarantee**, supporting the Joseph Rountree Foundation and the Trussel Trust in their campaign

WE WILL:

- Continue **training workers and leaders in our member institutions** to lead the campaign in our region
- Organise our communities to **secure Living Wage and Living Hours accreditations from our region's most iconic employers**, working closely with the North East Combined Authority
- **Bring together communities in places where the Mayor has planning, asset management and procurement powers** to organise for the Living Wage, harnessing local power to secure your vision

EDUCATION

We love our region - but it will only become a place where children and young people have equal opportunities to succeed if we build it that way.

From those experiencing mental ill health to children and young people of all cultures, ethnicities, religions and nationalities, we want to ensure that everyone can thrive.

We know that the education system can support this ambition. We want to work with the Mayor on two key areas of our education system, supporting them to understand and address educational inequity



To ensure that all children and young people in our region get best start in life, we need to challenge inequalities that harm our communities – whether low income, mental ill health or racism. We also need to understand how all of this intersects. To really close ‘attainment’ gaps, we have to better understand the context in which these gaps are created.

SYEDA CHOMPA BEGUM, SUNDERLAND BANGLADESH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE



SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING

Since 2018, Tyne & Wear Citizens has listened to more than two thousand teachers, parents and young people about mental health.

Two consistent messages emerged:

1. existing services fail often to meet the mental health needs of children and young people,
2. counselling is a viable alternative to existing, often overstretched, statutory or third-sector services.

The mental health of children and young people has deteriorated over the last few years. Now, one in five of those aged 8 to 19 years have a diagnosable mental health condition.

England is the only country in the UK where universal counselling provision is not funded by national or local government.

OUR TRACK RECORD

- In 2018, we held a year-long Citizens Commission on Mental Health in the North East. One of the actions that came out of that commission was the need for school- and college-based counselling provision.
- In 2020, we established a school-based counselling service in NEAT Academy Trust. The pilot was evaluated by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and the service was made permanent.
- Our campaign has developed into a national priority. To date, we have worked with other Citizen UK alliances to set up the first National Young People's Action Team, win funding for school-based counselling across the UK and formed a National Action Team that includes teaching unions and mental health organisations.

WE ASK THE NORTH EAST MAYOR TO

- **Commission a regional pilot of school-based counselling provision for Year 9 students**, so that each school has access to a professionally registered counsellor
- Ensure that this pilot provides **high-quality counselling provision that is sensitive to the child's family dynamics, the impact of social determinants and the demography of the school catchment area** and that is integrated with other stakeholders, including Mental Health Leads, Family Liaison Officers, senior management teams and external agencies (Social Services, Police, Local Authority)
- Enable NHS Mental Health Foundation Trusts to work with schools, colleges and community institutions to **strengthen local support networks around families** and enable young people to identify and tackle the causes of mental ill-health
- **Call of National Government** so that school- and college-based counselling is available across England

School-based counselling was great for me. It's the only place that I can just talk about me. I first saw the counsellor in Year 7 when my Nana died. This had a massive effect on me. In lockdown, I felt very alone and isolated from my family and that weekly call was something I looked forward to. My attendance has improved from 47% to over 90%.

**KEVIN, ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL,
NORTH TYNESIDE**

RACIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

Our listening has revealed systemic racial biases in our education system.

We need to challenge the poverty and social hierarchies which harm both racially minoritised and white working class communities. We also need to understand racial bias and racism within the education system, how this impacts grade awarding, therefore life chances.

Uncovering the racial disparities that exist within and between schools across our region is essential to continue working towards an equitable education system.

We want to work with the Mayor to understand and address educational inequalities both within the region and between our region and other parts of the UK.

OUR TRACK RECORD

- We're working with schools across our region to enable them to listen to their school communities and create changes for greater racial justice. This work has led to schools making changes to curricula, diversifying literature, enabling greater religious freedom and recognition via the celebration of religious holidays, the delivering of teacher training to increase racial literacy and cultural competency.
- Our campaign is now a Citizens UK priority. We're working with others from across the UK to influence the next Government to create great racial equity in the education system. We're working with decision makers to diversify the national curriculum and to put structures in place to make this a success.



**WE ASK THE NORTH
EAST MAYOR TO:**

- Commission **new research, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, into racial inequality** with regards to grade awarding gaps within the North East education system and between the North East and other regions
- **Convene a task force** to address findings of the above
- Work with members on the above and to **support the targeting of our organising work**
- **Call on National Government,** supporting our campaign for greater racial equity in the education system

WE WILL:

- Continue to **develop leaders committed to taking action** to address educational **attainment, equality and wellbeing**
- Work with the Mayor to **support the start-up of the school-based counselling pilot and its evaluation**
- Work with the Mayor to **support the research into racial inequalities in our education system,** working with experts amongst our membership
- Work within the **task force to support and deliver action plans to address awarding gaps** in our region



Students told us they experience racism, microaggressions, lack a sense of belonging and community, lack peer networks and may not always find their personal and academic tutors accessible; these experiences have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

DR AMINA RAZAK, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

HOUSING & HOMING

Too many in our region live in homes that undermine our dignity and quality of life – houses are too often too expensive, overcrowded, have rampant damp and mould, soaring rents, and few ways to hold rogue landlords accountable when things go wrong. Homelessness provision is experienced as a postcode lottery across our region.

We want to ensure that everyone, regardless of income or background, has an affordable, safe, warm, sustainable home to live in and can access equitable support when things go wrong.

These issues have been prevalent in all of our listening for the past 8 years, but Devolution has provided a new opportunity to act.

The North East Mayor will have the powers to work with the Government to hold landlords to account, drive the delivery of 1000s of new homes, and work on inequalities across the region.

We want to work with the Mayor and Combined Authority to secure and maintain decent, affordable homes across the region.



We had a hole in our roof where bedrooms would experience the outside weather indoors, an exposed, wet brick wall in a bedroom and a bathroom that fell through to our downstairs neighbours. We sent countless emails and phone calls to our letting manager and landlord. Though we were able to have some of the issues resolved, months later, we were still living in a house that is yet to become our home

RYAN ROSS, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

**WE ASK THE NORTH
EAST MAYOR TO:**

- Commit to creating a **Good Landlord Charter** to hold landlords accountable and ensure decent standards for rented properties in the first year of term
- Commit to working with us to ensure **new build houses in the region are affordable using the Local Housing Allowance** as a guide
- Develop the mandated **Homelessness Prevention Blueprint**, based on **learning from and sharing good homelessness practice across the region**

WE WILL:

- **Support the development of Good Landlord Charter**, based on our listening across the region
- **Promote the Good Landlord Charter** amongst our member and partner institutions, supporting the uptake and normalisation of the Charter across the region
- **Work with Citizens UK chapters across the country**, who are developing similar initiatives, to share learning
- **Train our members** to enable a greater **understanding of the housing & homelessness system**

IN ADDITION...

Our members would like to work with the Mayor to:

Strengthen the Good Work Pledge by

1. Strengthening the emphasis of Living Wage Foundation accreditation as an essential element of becoming a good employer
2. Including explicit measures to address religious freedom e.g. enabling employees to take leave to celebrate religious festivals
3. Including and promoting good practice guidance by organisations that champion marginalised workers, e.g. those experiencing homelessness

Consider social and economic justice in policy & projects that seek to transition to net zero.

We want to see a transition to a net zero world which is fair and reduces inequality. We want to live in a region where nature and people flourish together. Where industrial development is carried out in consideration of people and planet, where people connect and can build communities in our parks and green spaces



Eid is a very joyous, cherished event shared with family and friends. I feel disheartened that I have to either call in sick or use holidays to properly celebrate this day. This has a detrimental effect on my work life as sickness isn't taken lightly. It's unfair as the UK prides itself on being multi cultural . All a Muslim person wants is acceptance.

FATIMA, SUFFRAGE SISTERS ALLIANCE, NEWCASTLE

RELATIONSHIP WITH US

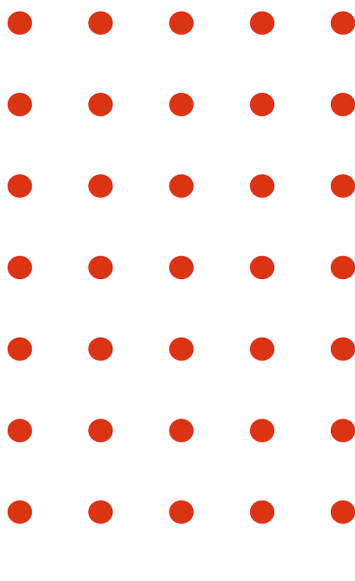
Broad based community organising is about putting people before programme.

We know that these issues hurting us may change, but the need for our organisations to be working together and building collective power is ongoing.

More important than any individual issue or ask is that we build a relationship with decision-makers, so that our communities have a seat at the table.



**IF YOU'RE
NOT AT
THE TABLE
THEN YOU
ARE ON THE
MENU**



WE ASK THE NORTH EAST MAYOR TO:

- Update us about the progress they are making on our manifesto
- Attend the next Tyne & Wear Citizens assembly. This will be an opportunity to share the progress made on the issues we have agreed to work together on
- Commit to finding opportunities to work with Tyne & Wear Citizens for the common good of our region
- Commit the relevant Cabinet Members and officers to meet with us at least 3 times a year to work together on the issues we have agreed to prioritise

WE WILL:

- Work with the Mayor, Cabinet Members and officers to make our manifesto a reality
- Work together with the Mayor to support them in areas of common interest
- Update the Mayor and their teams on the progress we are making on the commitments we have made
- Share stories and insights from our ongoing listening about their experience in the region
- Find ways to celebrate the Mayor and their team when action is taken on our manifesto asks



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JACQUARD POINT
1 AND 3 TAPESTRY WAY LONDON
E1 2FJ
020 7043 9881
INFO@CITIZENSUK.ORG
WWW.CITIZENSUK.ORG

**Scan here to find out
more about our work**

