

50



Top Achievements
by Labour Councils

Foreword

While the Labour Party may not be in government nationally, we are increasingly in government locally, and we are achieving a lot. It is a source of pride and inspiration for our movement that in communities across the country Labour councillors are leading the way in exceptionally tough times for local government.

David Cameron, George Osborne and Eric Pickles have unfairly imposed the biggest cuts in funding on the poorest areas – those communities that can least afford it – and their promise of devolution has proved nothing of the sort, as they have taken new powers to control council publications, remove planning decisions from local communities and weaken planning protection for our high streets and town centres. And because of their economic incompetence, they have choked off growth and delivered the slowest recovery on record, while announcing further, deeper cuts locally.

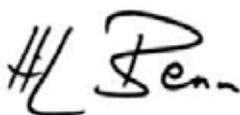
And yet, despite all this Coalition failure, with confidence and determination Labour councils are making really tough choices. They do so not because they don't care, but because they do and they know that to choose is to express our values and make the Labour difference.

This publication highlights and celebrates 50 of the ways in which Labour councils are making that difference. It is a chance to share just some of the important work that our colleagues are doing so that we can learn from each other about what can be done to help people improve their own lives.

As well as that, it shows the wealth of ideas, ambition, energy and leadership that we have in Labour local government. And while in the past national Labour politicians too often looked to tell local government what to do, now national Labour politicians are looking to local government to shine the way.

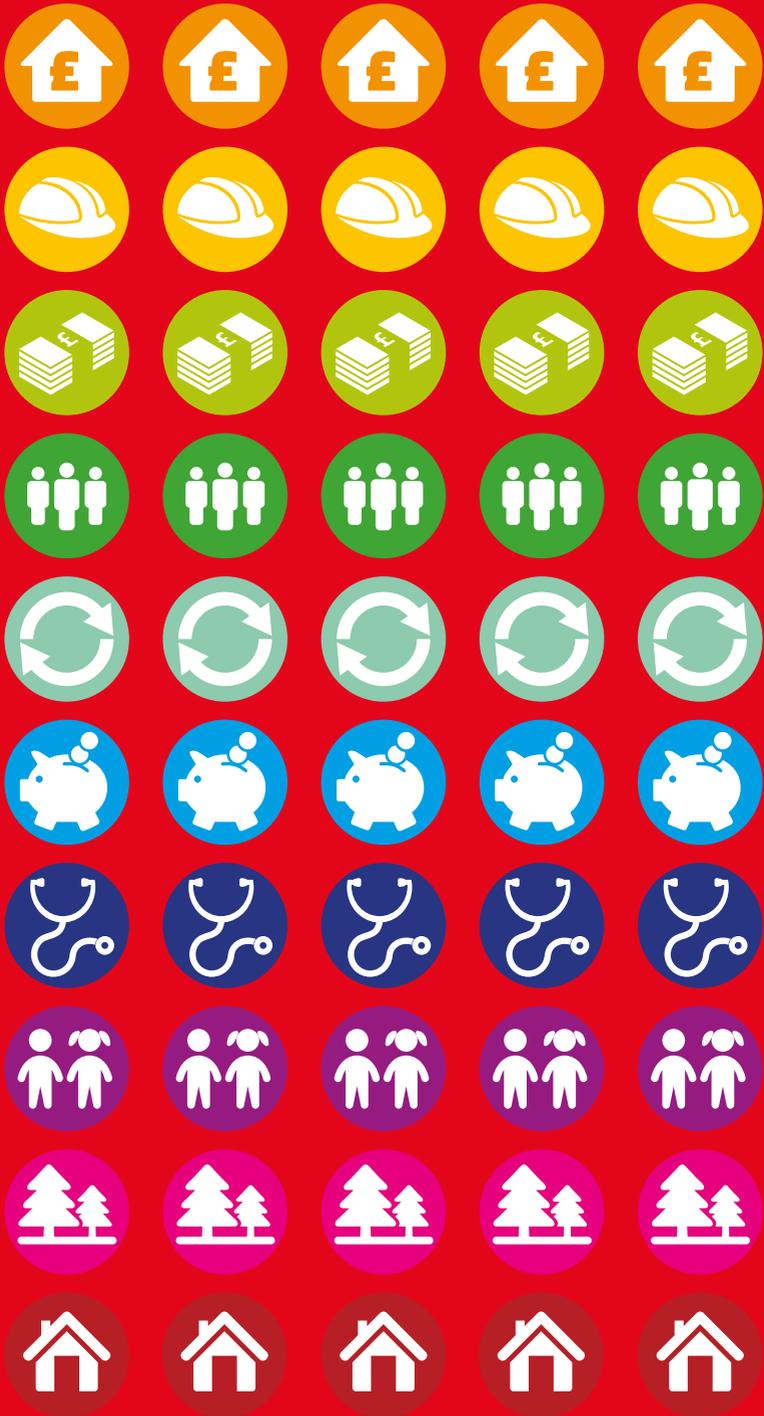
It's why Ed Miliband has asked Sir Richard Leese, Sharon Taylor and Jules Pipe to lead a new Taskforce to advise us on how to reform the way in which public services are provided at a time of less money. It's why as part of Labour's Policy Review we're looking at how we can go further to devolve powers and funding over housing, planning, transport, jobs and skills as part of an English New Deal.

I encourage you to feed into this new thinking and to shout loudly about the fantastic work Labour councils are already doing across the country in making a difference to so many lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Benn'.

Hilary Benn MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government



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Tackling the cost of living

01

Helping residents reduce energy bills and tackling fuel poverty

Many Labour councils have launched energy switch schemes to use the collective buying power of residents to get better deals from energy providers, including Norwich council, the first city in the country to run such a scheme and Oldham council, which signed up 38,700 households across Greater Manchester to a Fair Energy scheme, with an average saving to residents of £171 and the highest saving of £700. The Warm Up North scheme is an innovative partnership covering eight councils – Darlington, Durham, Redcar and Cleveland, Sunderland, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Newcastle and Northumberland – and delivered by British Gas. It will benefit up to 50,000 households and businesses offering energy efficiency measures such as free or discounted insulation, and as well as saving costs for people struggling with energy bills it is expected to create around 500 new jobs.

02

Leading the way on fair pay

54 Labour councils in England and Wales are now paying the Living Wage, or are committed to become Living Wage employers. This means paying their staff at least a wage to meet the basic cost of living, which is currently £8.55 in London and £7.45 in the UK outside the capital. Many are going beyond the Living Wage rate, for example Barking & Dagenham council has guaranteed all its lowest paid employees a minimum wage of £9 an hour.

03 Keeping Council Tax bills down

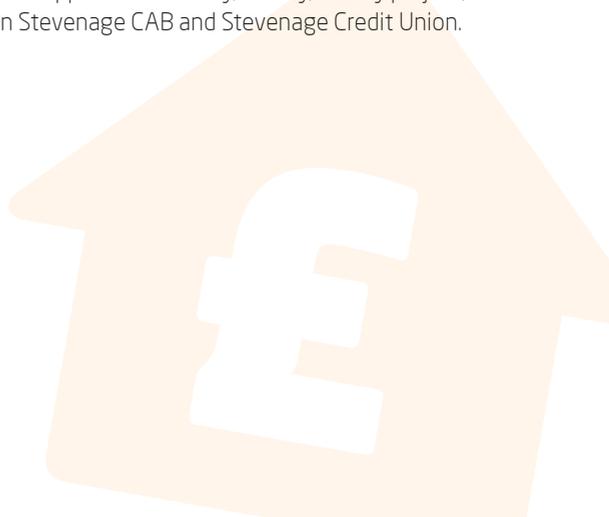
Hackney council has now kept council tax frozen for eight years running to help hard pressed families.

04 Working with private sector partners locally to reduce the cost of living

Oldham council worked co-operatively with the bus company First to reduce the cost of a weekly bus ticket from £18 to £13 (£12 for Oldham Credit Union members), which results in a 28 per cent weekly saving and a total annual saving of £260.

05 Helping people with problem debt and taking a stand against unscrupulous money lenders

Many Labour councils are investing in advice and support for residents with problem debt. Plymouth council is taking action against payday loan companies that cause many residents to run up huge debts by stopping the companies advertising on billboards and bus stops. Many Labour councils including Plymouth, Birmingham, Sandwell, Oldham, Brent and Haringey are blocking access to websites offering payday loans throughout their IT networks so they cannot be accessed from libraries or community centres. Ipswich council has become a member of its local credit union and Stevenage council supports the Money, Money, Money project, a partnership between Stevenage CAB and Stevenage Credit Union.





Creating jobs and helping people get new skills

06

Tackling youth unemployment

Many Labour councils have invested in support to create jobs for young people: the Nottingham Jobs Fund subsidises young people's employment for a year and has supported over 400 young people into work; the Haringey Jobs Fund is investing £3.5m to directly support jobs for young people for at least 12 months; and the Birmingham Jobs Fund is a multi-million pound package of support for employers and tailored training which aims to get over 1,000 long-term unemployed young people into jobs. Leicester council's Step Up scheme addresses youth unemployment by offering 18-24 year-olds six months of paid employment in a job that will give them the skills and experience relevant to current labour market needs. Reading council is developing a "one-stop shop" smart phone app and social media tools providing information on job opportunities and practical application advice, with direct input from young people and local businesses.

07

Working with local companies to create new job opportunities for young people

Plymouth council's 1,000 Club Campaign aims to recruit 1,000 companies in the city to commit to supporting young people into employment. So far this has created 353 full-time jobs, 12 part-time jobs, 286 apprenticeships,

153 internships, 174 work placements and 151 school work experience placements, provided by almost 190 businesses. Darlington council's Foundation for Jobs is a cross-sector partnership to reduce youth unemployment which has involved 110 new apprenticeships; 105 internships or work experience placements; linked 1,100 young people with industry; and given advice to 66 young people about going into business themselves.

08 Matching up local people with local employment opportunities

Nottingham council's Employer Hub provides a training and recruitment service which matches supply and demand in the local labour market. It has already helped almost 200 people into jobs, providing a specialist service that gives employers a single point of contact to match their bespoke recruitment needs from advertising, application advice and administration and pre-employment training.

09 Helping the long-term unemployed back into work

Newham council's Workplace scheme offers personalised support for jobseekers linked to the local labour market and has helped get more than 17,000 local people into work in five years – 5,000 last year alone. Wigan council is investing in a new support team to give training advice to people aged 25-50 who are long-term unemployed to help them re-engage with the labour market.

10 Creating new apprenticeship opportunities

Birmingham council mounted a successful campaign to create 1000 apprenticeships in 100 days. Wakefield council identified 197 new apprenticeship opportunities with 64 local companies in one year. Redcar and Cleveland council are one of The Times Top 100 Apprentice Employers, in 2012/13 helping more than 350 residents get jobs, including 140 apprentices in local companies. The Knowsley Apprentice programme has matched over 400 young people with new work opportunities from over 200 companies and 86 per cent have moved into sustainable employment. Sheffield council has used procurement to ensure that large contracts have created 272 apprenticeships; run an apprentice scheme which offers employers a 50 per cent subsidy and which has set up 222 apprenticeships

and led the City Region's skills programme which aims to support SMEs to create 4,000 apprenticeships. Barnsley council has committed to at least 2.5 per cent of its own workforce being apprentices. Corby council identified savings in its housing maintenance service by switching from agency labour to create 27 permanent positions including the creation of three new apprenticeships. Leeds council is making it easier for local businesses to take on apprentices by setting up the Leeds Apprenticeship Training Agency in partnership with Leeds City College. The LATA sources, arranges and hosts for SMEs, taking full responsibility for recruitment, HR issues, supervision and quality assurance.

11

Working to identify, prevent and support young people who are or are at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Sheffield council has worked with local schools, colleges and training providers to identify young people at risk based on attendance, behaviour, progress and other social and family indicators. Schools then nominate pupils at Key Stage 4 to receive additional support. Leeds council has a Devolved Youth Contract for young people who are NEET – each is assigned a key worker and receives employability training and mentoring.

12

Developing sustainable solutions for those affected by welfare cuts

Labour councils have worked proactively to defend people affected by the Government's welfare reforms. Many have resolved to protest on behalf of and protect the victims of the Bedroom Tax, committing to a clear set of principles by which they will support tenants affected. Labour councils are also supporting those affected by the total benefit cap to find more sustainable solutions. Greenwich council contacted those affected before the reform came in, assessed their needs and referred many people for employment support. Among wide-ranging support for employment and skills, the council runs its own employability programme, the Greenwich Local Labour initiative, which provides temporary jobs to gain experience, paying at least the London Living Wage.



Supporting economic growth

13

Developing key sectors for growth in the local economy

Nottingham's Growth Plan is restructuring the city's economy around three key sectors – science, creative industries and new technologies – with the growth of SMEs and the creation of jobs as a central part. The development of a new Creative Quarter, building on existing incubators and clusters of technology-based companies in growth sectors of life sciences, digital content and clean technologies, will build a high-value cluster of creative businesses to help entrepreneurship to flourish. With the aim of becoming a model for how cities can change their fortunes in the face of economic downturns, the council is supporting this and the wider growth plan by investing in infrastructure, and providing access to grants and other business support such as skilled employees through apprenticeships and training packages. Sunderland council has identified new growth areas for the local economy in automotive and advance manufacturing and actively encouraged inward investment by establishing partnerships with Washington DC and agreements with Harbin in China. New jobs and investment have been brought back from low wage economies by using cutting edge technology and modern process systems, with new manufacturing plants opening making cars and automotive components.

14 Maximising social and economic benefits for communities from council decisions

Liverpool council's Procurement Board ensures decisions have a positive impact on jobs and skills with rules favouring organisations with a smaller gap between the highest and lowest paid staff, social enterprises that put profits back into creating more jobs and firms that demonstrate clear local benefits. Sandwell council includes a community benefit clause in major public contracts to ensure job and apprenticeship offers are made to local residents. The Supply South Tyneside initiative will increase public sector spend with local suppliers from £50 million to £80.5 million by 2017 to stimulate the local economy. Norwich council awarded the contract for the redecoration of council homes to a company that will employ up to 80 per cent of its workforce from unemployed local residents.

Labour councils spend 30 per cent of their budgets buying local goods and services, while Conservative councils spend just 20 per cent. Averaged over all councils, this would suggest that local businesses in Labour authorities enjoy a £16 million-a-year advantage over those in Conservative or Liberal Democrat authorities. 74 per cent of Labour councils use social value clauses in their contracts to ensure local benefit from non-local businesses, such as guarantee local jobs, apprenticeships, training places, investment in community schemes and opportunities for social enterprises. In comparison, only 41 per cent of Conservative councils use social value clauses.

15 Supporting small businesses to develop and succeed

Stevenage council set up a Business and Technology Centre which has so far provided facilities and business support to 300 local small and medium sized businesses and increased the rate of businesses still trading after 12 months to 93 per cent, double the national average. Manchester council created the Sharp Project, a digital media hub for small creative businesses which has affordable flexible rents in a shared space, with access to support to collaborate, develop employee skills and create apprenticeship opportunities. Blackburn with Darwen council lets new start-ups use empty shops in the town centre at no cost. Newcastle council introduced enterprise centres which offer new and existing businesses a range of serviced accommodation in the city.



16 Working with businesses to build support for growth

Kirklees council's Business Collaboration Network is facilitating businesses to help other businesses with an overall financial benefit for participating companies of £464,000 a year. Gateshead council manages a regional business collaboration network for digital and technology industries that directly supports over 250 businesses across the region and encourages creative industries to locate there. Oldham council supports the Oldham Business Network Forum which reaches out to smaller businesses to promote the opportunities and benefits of apprenticeships. Telford & Wrekin council's One Stop Shop for business, Business and Development Charter and free pre-application planning advice are all encouraging investment and growth in the borough, reflecting its role supporting and winning business for the area.

17 Helping local shops and high streets to thrive

Redditch council has abolished car parking charges on all council-run car parks. Blackburn with Darwen council offers free car parking on all council-owned car parks on Saturdays. Helping local shops and high streets to thrive York council has created a phone app for tourists, residents and shoppers to guide visitors around the city centre while learning about the history of York through augmented reality. This is creating business opportunities for retailers and attractions whilst generating an income stream for council taxpayers.





Strengthening communities

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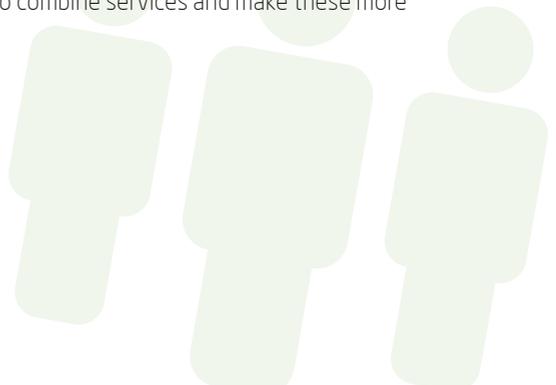
Involving local people in decision-making

Durham council's Area Action Partnerships have involved 5,000 people in decision-making on local priorities and investment. Lewisham Council's network of ward-based assemblies has involved 13,000 people in influencing council priorities. Barnsley council is setting up six area councils with devolved budgets to meet local needs – members commission activity directly from the community to increase resilience and enterprise, whilst building capacity in the voluntary sector and community ownership of issues and response.

19

Helping local communities to keep libraries open

Merton council's new volunteering model has helped all libraries to be kept open in the borough. Lewisham council has made savings on its library service whilst increasing opening hours and user numbers by retaining 12 locations, transferring five smaller community libraries to local groups and social enterprises and maintaining investment in new libraries. Telford & Wrekin council has introduced new co-operative working arrangements with partners to keep all its libraries open and is providing one stop shop facilities in main libraries to combine services and make these more accessible to residents



20 Improving community safety

Ealing council has set up a partnership with the Met Police whereby police officers work together with licensing and anti-social behaviour teams. This has reduced crime in licensed premises, doubled the number of ASBOs issued and targeted work on street prostitution and betting shops. Durham council's Total Home Safety has made 4,500 homes safer and more secure, resulting in a 35 per cent reduction in domestic burglary and a 15 per cent reduction in domestic fires. Newcastle council introduced a night time levy, the proceeds of which will be used to enhance the night time economy and help the police and council address the costs of associated crime and anti-social behaviour. Birmingham council appointed a Victims' Champion and developed a Victims' Charter for those affected by crime.

21 Supporting armed forces personnel and honouring the sacrifice of fallen soldiers

Barking and Dagenham council offers a guaranteed interview for all available jobs in the council to former service personnel; veterans can access leisure services at a discounted price; and three streets in the borough have been named after fallen soldiers. Dudley council is offering all armed forces personnel and their families half-price admission to leisure and recreation facilities.





Regenerating and repairing places

22

Repairing damaged roads

Coventry council is resurfacing 75 miles of road each year, after inheriting some of the worst road surfaces in the country from the previous Conservative administration. Haringey council is repairing potholes at the rate of 300 per week on roads damaged by the winter weather.

23

Improving neighbourhoods

Following concerns raised by residents about littered, overgrown and untidy gardens, Barking and Dagenham council launched a high profile "Eyesore Garden Project" involving local people in days of action. This was welcomed by residents and led to significant improvements, with a total of 7,871 complaints were investigated and 841 enforcement notices issued over a three year period.

24

Regenerating town centres to ensure they are vibrant and generate growth

Rossendale council is regenerating its town centre, demolishing a longstanding derelict area which had the highest number of empty shops in the country and attracting new investment for redevelopment. Lambeth council transformed an arcade of empty units into Brixton Village, a thriving hub of micro-businesses bringing new jobs, customers and investment. Town centre regeneration projects in Gateshead are creating 2,600 jobs in construction and new retail spaces. Bury council has brought forward plans to bring multi-million pound investment in leisure and shopping to redevelop the town centre.



Delivering with less

25

Sharing staff and services

By pooling staff and resources, Bolsover and North East Derbyshire councils are making savings in a wide range of areas. The two councils expect to save £1.5 million a year after joining together to form a 'Strategic Alliance'. They are sharing a chief executive and senior managers, reducing the number of senior managers from 26 to 16. Further savings have been made by sharing some services and back office functions, such as a joint 'burgundy bin' recycling scheme which saved £400,000 a year whilst doubling the amount of material recycled, and shared ground maintenance and street cleaning which resulted in ongoing efficiency savings of £180,000.

26

Saving through new technology

Blackburn with Darwen council saved £2.2 million in one year using pioneering new TeleCare technology, surpassing its target of £1.9 million. The new technology, in partnership with the local NHS, uses features such as round-the-clock, rapid response emergency alarms and fall detectors, allowing people to stay independent for longer and reducing the number of people taken into residential care in the area by 18 per cent.

27

Sharing information

Barnsley council made efficiency savings by ensuring that different services were sharing address and geographical information. The change allows the council to better optimise waste collection routes to produce expected savings of over £1 million over four years. A single address database shared by all departments saves time and money, for example, when somebody moves house they now only need to tell the council once, rather than having to tell several different departments.

28 Taking a preventive approach to care to promote independence and reduce expensive treatment

Hackney council's adult social care services is committed to promoting independence by supporting people to stay in their homes and out of formal care through community-based services using reablement and intermediate care. These approaches have made savings of nearly £2 million in 2012/13 and further savings of £4.5 million are projected for 2013/14. The Royal Borough of Greenwich has developed a clear referral pathway from a single access point through to the delivery of a range of emergency, hospital discharge, community social and rehabilitation support and intermediate care at home. This more accessible and flexible service deals with 50 per cent of all cases at first point of contact, is reducing the numbers of emergency hospital admissions and people requiring ongoing long term care and produced £1 million cost savings in just one year.

29 Keeping streetlights on and cutting costs

Plymouth council is saving money whilst improving safety and reducing carbon emissions. Approximately 28,000 streetlights in the area are being replaced with LED bulbs, saving an average of approximately £919,000 a year over the next 20 years (a massive 34 per cent of the council's street lighting costs). LED streetlights use a fraction of the energy of a normal bulb yet are clearer, brighter and produce less light pollution. The change is expected to cut carbon emissions by 3200 tonnes a year.

30 Delivering efficiencies through co-operative commissioning

Using a co-operative commissioning approach, Oldham council proactively commissioned its children's centres based on need and outcomes that were specific to local communities. The process resulted in a saving of £220,000 and mixed provision of service with Save the Children now running two of the children's centres.





Promoting health & wellbeing

31

Developing new models of integrated health and social care

Manchester council is working with the NHS to develop new integrated services, in which multidisciplinary care teams including community nurses, GPs, mental health and social workers support patients at risk of hospital admission. All three large acute hospitals in Manchester have joint health and social care discharge teams that contribute directly to improved hospital performance and patient outcomes across the city. Darlington council's RIACT is an integrated health and social care service which supports timely hospital discharge and prevents avoidable admissions to hospitals, delivering rehabilitation, recovery and reablement. Referral rates have doubled since the service launched in May 2012 with high satisfaction rates and increasing numbers leaving the service with no ongoing needs.

32

Pioneering new ways of improving public health

Wigan council is changing its entire approach towards prevention of ill health, resulting in recurrent cost savings of £500,000 in surgery budgets and a decrease in the prevalence of obesity. Coventry council's work on teenage pregnancy and their work on smoking cessation with trading standards on tobacco control have both seen a decline in rates. Gateshead council have supported people to give up smoking and reduced the number of smokers in the borough from 26 per cent to 19 per cent.

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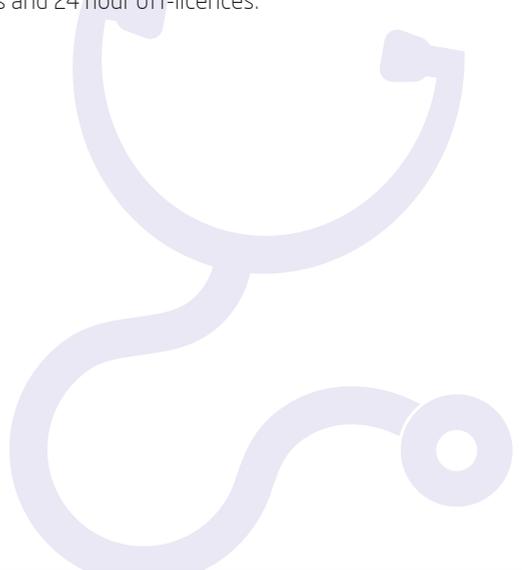
Promoting access to leisure

Redditch and Nuneaton & Bedworth councils offer free swimming for children and people over 60. Burnley Council offers free swimming for under-16s. North East Derbyshire council's approach to developing its Leisure Services has resulted in reduced subsidy costs of over £500,000 and gained £500,000 in additional income since 2009, while seeing over 100,000 additional visits per year despite the difficult economic outlook and trading position. Birmingham council's loyalty reward scheme incentivises the use of leisure facilities and resulted in members changing from one activity a week to three, increasing participation in physical activity and contributing to healthier lifestyles.

34

Combating the proliferation of unhealthy outlets on our high streets

Waltham Forest council banned fast food outlets from opening within 400 yards of any school, youth club or park, in order to tackle the growing problem of obesity in young people. Lambeth council's Street Detox Commission is looking at how to make its high streets healthier by tackling the over-concentration of shops that encourage poor financial and physical health. The council will use its combined public health, planning and licensing powers to tackle proliferations of irresponsible money lenders, betting shops, fast food outlets and 24 hour off-licences.





Improving education and supporting children

35

Providing free meals to school children

Recognising that nutrition is vital to improving concentration at school, boosting attainment and health outcomes, a number of Labour councils including Islington, Newham and Southwark provide free school meals to all primary school children and Blackpool council provides free breakfasts to all primary school children.

36

Providing financial support to young people to stay in education after the Coalition Government abolished the Educational Maintenance Allowance

The Southwark Educational Maintenance Supplement (SEMS) has paid an average of £262 to 1,280 16-18 year olds to support them through further education. Newcastle council has introduced a replacement EMA which has enabled thousands of young people to stay on at college. In Islington 241 students have so far benefited from a £300 bursary each.

37 Boosting children's literacy rates

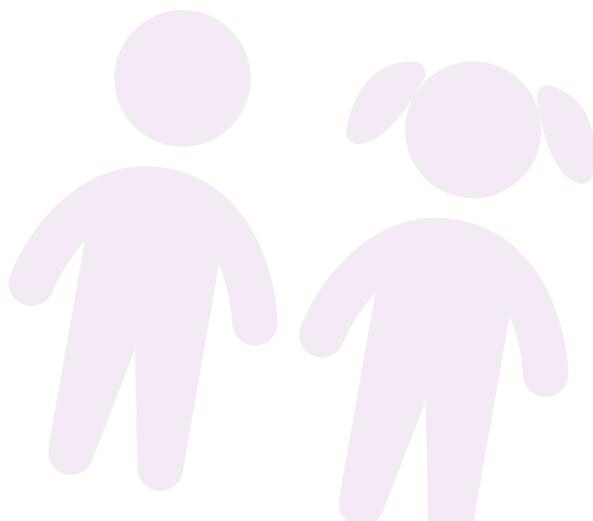
Merton council provides automatic library membership for all children aged five to 11. Newham council's Every Newham Child A Reader guarantees that every child will leave school able to read. Rotherham council's Imagination Library sends a book every month to every child up to the age of five.

38 Finding new ways of delivering services for young people despite the cuts

Lambeth council has set up the Young Lambeth Cooperative which enables young people themselves to take responsibility for allocating funding for services including youth centres, adventure playgrounds and play clubs. This will give people more ownership over the services with 1,500 young people, parents and local groups already registering an interest in getting involved.

39 Improving the adoption process

A new shared adoption service WWiSH, between Warrington, Wigan and St Helens councils, is speeding up the adoption process and reducing the length of time children must wait before being placed with a family. It is also tackling the shortfall in prospective adopters compared to the number of children waiting to be adopted using a successful marketing and publicity campaign leading to a surge in new applicants for assessment.





Supporting the environment and tackling climate change

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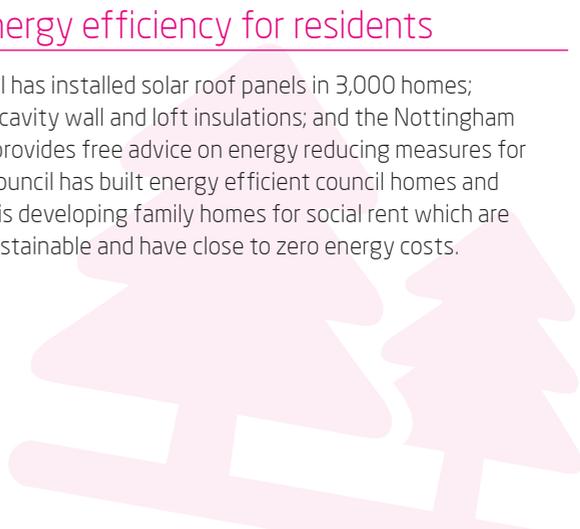
Leading the way in reducing carbon footprints

In two years Preston council reduced its CO2 emissions by 17 per cent or 1,225 tonnes. Norwich council is using a carbon management programme to reduce the council's carbon footprint and has achieved 24 per cent in the last five years. Wigan council has supported the establishment of the UK's first zero-energy cost industrial park.

41

Improving energy efficiency for residents

Nottingham council has installed solar roof panels in 3,000 homes; completed 10,000 cavity wall and loft insulations; and the Nottingham Energy Calculator provides free advice on energy reducing measures for residents. Exeter council has built energy efficient council homes and Stevenage council is developing family homes for social rent which are environmentally sustainable and have close to zero energy costs.



42 Improving residents' satisfaction with waste collection and improving recycling

Waltham Forest council negotiated a new waste collection contract which was designed around residents' preferences expressed in a consultation. By using split body vehicles and double shift working on recycling collections it has saved £2 million per year whilst maintaining weekly collections. By giving residents recycling bins instead of boxes and reducing the size of residual waste bins, recycling collected from the kerbside has been increased by 176 per cent in the last year. Resident satisfaction with the waste collection service has risen to 82 per cent – up from 50 per cent in 2011.

43 Pioneering new models of publicly owned power providers

Launched in 2012, Islington's Bunhill Energy Centre and district wide heat network provides cheaper, greener energy to more than 700 homes on local estates and two leisure centres, in competition with big private utilities. Development work is already underway to extend it to capture local sources of urban waste heat and connect up another 500 council homes. Nottingham council has the largest district heating system in the UK serving 5,000 homes and saving 27,000 tonnes of CO2 annually.





Building homes, helping first- time buyers and improving housing

44

Building new homes

Labour councils are working towards ambitious housing targets to deliver much-needed housing in their areas including a target of 2,000 new affordable homes in Islington by 2015, 553 new affordable homes in Blackpool by 2015 and Liverpool and Manchester councils each have a programme to build 5,000 new homes in the cities by 2016.

45

Finding new ways of getting investment in new house-building

Islington council's employee pension fund is investing £20m to build new homes for private rent throughout the country, which has the aim of addressing the affordable housing crisis and directly stimulating growth. A new Housing Investment Model in Manchester with two main partners, the council and the Greater Manchester Pension Fund, will provide 240 new homes in the initial pilot, with the potential of extending the approach across other sites in the city.

46 Building the next generation of council houses

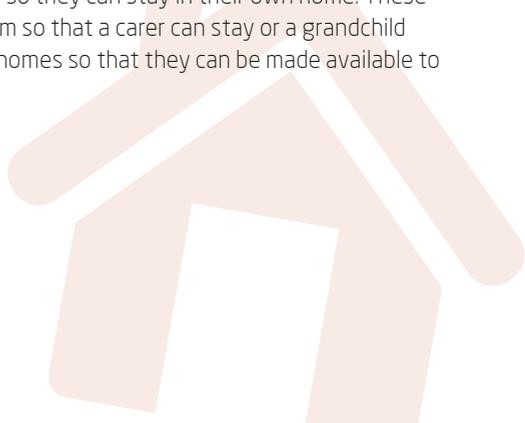
Labour councils are using the new financing agreed under the previous Labour Government to push ahead with building more council houses – Southwark announced in 2012 a programme to build 1,000 new council homes by 2020 and has since committed to build another 10,000 new council homes. Many Labour councils have plans for new council housing including York, Exeter, Leeds, Nottingham, Ipswich and Stevenage: overall five times as many social homes are being built in Labour authorities than in Conservative authorities.

47 Helping first-time buyers onto the property ladder

Many Labour councils are participating in the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme which tops up the deposits of first time buyers with as little as 5 per cent deposit, including Blackpool, Warrington, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Luton, Leeds, Liverpool, Oldham, Gedling, Rochdale, Stevenage, Tameside, Derby, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Others have developed their own schemes for first time buyers, including Sandwell council which offers affordable mortgages linked to new build homes to help kick-start development and Manchester council which is developing a Manchester Mortgage Guarantee Scheme with the Co-operative Bank and Manchester Building Society.

48 Building bungalows for older people

Sandwell council has a two-bedroom bungalow programme and the new properties will be offered to people locally. The scheme is designed to meet the needs of older people so they can stay in their own home. These properties will have a spare room so that a carer can stay or a grandchild can visit and will free up larger homes so that they can be made available to bigger families with children.



49 Improving quality, affordability and stability in the private rented sector and tackling rogue landlords

Newham council's borough-wide licensing scheme ensures all private tenants have the assurance that their landlord is reputable and able to carry out their duties. The council is also intent on becoming a player in the local private rented market to let at affordable rents and drive up quality. Blackpool council is targeting areas which have high concentrations of private sector landlords with selective licensing combined with tough enforcement. Oxford council has a licensing scheme to ensure standards in homes of multiple occupation, with a fee structure that rewards better landlords.

50 Developing creative solutions to empty homes

Stoke-on-Trent and Liverpool councils are both offering to sell empty homes for only £1, combined with low interest loans to upgrade the property, through which residents can refurbish themselves. Residents must agree live in the homes for a minimum of five years, so as reciprocal deals they enable home ownership and encourage a greater stake in communities which were blighted by properties standing empty and in need of regeneration. In one year Derby council brought 140 empty homes back into use, forcing owners of long term vacant properties to sell up to create new homes for people in housing need and to counter urban decline and anti-social behaviour.



The LGA Labour Group exists to provide a strong voice for Labour in local government and acts as a platform for ideas and discussion for all those committed to an effective localist element in Labour politics and policies.

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