

[Press release: Helping residents be prepared for flooding](#)

The North East's Flood Community Engagement officer Anna Caygill will be working with schools, businesses and communities in the town and surrounding areas to prepare for severe weather.

And she is kick-starting the project by hosting an event called 'Flooding in a changing climate' which will look at the impact of changing weather patterns and how this will affect the community.

- It takes place on Thursday 25 October between 11am and 3pm at Cornerstones Community Centre, North Burns.

Chester-le-Street has a recent flood history with over 900 properties at risk of flooding from surface water, and from the River Wear and Cong Burn.

Flooding on 28 June 2012 caused widespread damage and disruption – but the flood history of the town dates right back as far as the great flood of 1771.

Engagement complements flood scheme

Anna is building on previous work by Durham County Council's Civil Contingency Unit and working with the community to develop a Community Flood Plan and recruit more volunteer Flood Wardens – who are the eyes and ears of the community during a flood event. Anna said:

I'm working closely with Durham County Council and the town's Flood Wardens to ensure residents in the area are prepared for flooding.

The engagement complements the flood scheme currently being carried out by the council at the Market Place to reduce flood risk from the Cong Burn, as well as ongoing environmental work being done by Wear Rivers Trust.

We really want people to understand their flood risk and know what steps they can take to ensure they are prepared in the event of a flood, such as making sure they are signed up to receive free flood warnings and having a flood plan which is easy to follow.

Residents can find out if they live in an area at risk of flooding and sign up to receive free flood warnings by [visiting here](#)

For more information about the upcoming event contact Anna.Caygill@environment-agency.gov.uk

News story: New measures announced to combat forced marriage

The Home Secretary Sajid Javid has today (October 2) announced a package of measures today to tackle the appalling crime of forced marriage.

As part of this a public consultation will be launched to determine whether there should be a mandatory requirement for professionals to report a forced marriage case to the authorities. This will help identify:

- which professionals the duty would apply to
- the specific circumstances where a case would have to be reported
- potential sanctions for failure to comply with the duty

Further measures announced today to crack down on forced marriage include plans to:

- consult on including an explicit reference to forced marriage in the immigration rules to demonstrate that forced marriage is unacceptable in the UK
- launch a communications campaign to raise awareness of the issue
- work with the judiciary to examine whether anonymous evidence of forced marriage can be admissible as closed evidence in the appeals process
- consult on updated multi-agency statutory guidance on forced marriage to help ensure professionals understand forced marriage and their responsibilities

This work will progress over the coming months and follows previous action taken by the government to strengthen the law including the introduction of a specific criminal offence of forced marriage, lifelong anonymity for victims, and criminalising breach of a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO).

Press release: New awards to celebrate the best in the highways sector

The Highways England Awards aim to showcase individuals, teams, projects and companies.

Nominations open today, and are invited from all Highways England employees, its suppliers and their supply chain (including extended supply chain and small and medium enterprises).

To recognise the very best of its suppliers and staff, Highways England has combined the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Awards and the Supplier Recognition Scheme.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England chief executive, said:

At Highways England we are constantly challenging ourselves and our supply chain to achieve more for our customers. We focus our efforts around our three imperatives – safety, customer and delivery – and seek out ways to improve and innovate in these areas.

The Highways England Awards allow us to reflect on our accomplishments, celebrate our achievements and share examples of excellence in our industry. These awards will continue the legacy of the Supplier Recognition Scheme and the Health Safety and Wellbeing Awards under a single event, which recognises the very best work of our company and its suppliers.

I encourage you to apply for these awards. I know we have committed, talented and motivated people in our company and supply chain. This is your opportunity to take pride in your achievements and allow Highways England to celebrate the contributions made by those who work with us and for us.

View a video by Jim O'Sullivan announcing the launch of the awards:

[Highways England Awards 2019 launch](#)

Judges will be looking for nominations that demonstrate clear outcomes and benefits and illustrate how these have been evaluated. The winners will reflect the very best of the business and demonstrate the highest standards for the industry.

The ten award categories are:

Safety

- Excellence in Occupational Health and Wellbeing
- Excellence in Safety for Road Users
- Championing Safety
- Leading Behaviour Change for Safety

Customer

- Excellence in Customer Service
- Improving Customers Journeys
- Improving Employee Engagement and Behavioural Change

Delivery

- Excellence in Environment and Sustainability
- Leading Efficiencies and Continuous Improvement
- Project of the Year

In addition, the Chairman's Award for Excellence in Safety, which focuses specifically on excellence in safety and getting people 'home safe and well', will also be presented at the awards.

Previous Highways England award scheme winners include SafetyCam – a mobile road worker protection system that collects hard evidence of drivers entering roadworks to improve road worker safety. On average there are nearly 300 incidents a week of incursions and abuse reported by road workers. In 2016/17, a total of 31 fatal injuries to workers were caused by being struck by a moving vehicle. SafetyCam is tackling these issues, with 13 vehicles operational and another 10 due soon.

Darren Nelson, Chief Executive, Carnell Support Service Ltd said:

Winning a Highways England Health, Safety & Wellbeing Award provided us with a powerful endorsement of SafetyCam, our road worker protection system. This has not only raised awareness of our innovation, but also the dangers that site teams face every day on the strategic road network.

Since the awards success we have seen an increase in requests for long-term deployment from clients nationwide, which has led to us doubling our fleet. We are proud to have developed and shared a solution that has led to a demonstrable improvement in driver behaviour through road works.

The entry form is available on the [awards website](#).

The closing date for entries is 5pm on Monday 3 December 2018 and a ceremony to present the awards will take place in Birmingham on 28 March 2019.

For any further information please email: HEawards@highwaysengland.co.uk.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Insolvency Service celebrates customer services excellence](#)

Organised by the Institute of Customer Service, [National Customer Service Week \(NCSW\)](#) is running between 1 and 5 October 2018, aiming to raise awareness of customer services and the vital role it plays in successful business practice and the growth of the UK economy.

The Insolvency Service is using NCSW as an opportunity to highlight the importance of customer services excellence, how our services have evolved and how we assist different customers – from people considering Debt Relief Orders to workers applying to the Redundancy Payment Service for financial help.

With teams based in Leeds and Edinburgh, customer services handle more than 150,000 calls a year and are assessed annually.

For the past 19 years, we have been [awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard](#), recognising our continued focus on meeting the needs of our customers and in 2016/17, the Insolvency Service was awarded 5 new compliance plus ratings. In total we now hold 17 compliance plus and 40 compliant ratings.

Comments received from assessors during our last assessment included:

There is full corporate commitment throughout the organisation to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery.

During discussions, staff were very enthusiastic about their participation in what is clearly a very well established customer-focused culture within the organisation.

And it's not just the assessors who think our customer services are of a high standard as Insolvency Service staff have provided first-hand accounts of how they have turned difficult situations into favourable results.

In one case, someone going through bankruptcy called up the Insolvency Service on a Friday concerned that their bank account had been frozen. This meant they could not access their benefits and had bills to pay.

Usually, staff would just confirm if the bank was happy for the personal bank account to be used. But the customer representative was conscious that it

could be a whole weekend before the person could access their account again. Thinking quickly, the Insolvency Service called the bank to release the funds, before reassuring the customer that the money would be there, which was gratefully received.

Jackie Stevenson-Coe, Head of Customer Service & Insight, said:

We make every effort to improve our customer services to benefit everyone who deals with the Insolvency Service and being awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard is a tremendous achievement both for our customers and staff who work extremely hard to make it happen.

Providing excellent customer services is absolutely crucial and we will continue to improve our offering in order to assist our customers and achieve our mission in delivering economic confidence.

[Press release: New measures to support workers, businesses, and entrepreneurs](#)

Updated: Updated to reflect additional announcements.

The Business Secretary Greg Clark has announced a series of new measures to back businesses and entrepreneurs, support workers and ensure every part of the country benefits from the Government's modern Industrial Strategy.

The announcements build on the Government's record of delivering right across the Industrial Strategy – from record levels of investment in research and development, the biggest transformation of technical education and retraining in a decade to the fastest growth in infrastructure in the G7.

The new measures include:

Tipping

The government has announced plans to ensure that tips left for workers will go to them in full.

While most employers act in good faith, in some sectors evidence points towards poor tipping practices, including excessive deductions being made from tips left by customers.

New legislation, to be introduced at the earliest opportunity, will set out that tips must go to the workers providing the service.

Unemployment is at its lowest since the 1970s and wages are rising. This legislation will ensure workers get the tips they deserve and give consumers reassurance that the money they leave in good faith to reward good service is going to the staff, as they intended – ensuring that hard work is rewarded.

More protection for small businesses

A commitment to end the unfair treatment of small businesses by companies who abuse their position by paying late for products and services.

The Government will strengthen the Prompt Payment Code with a new tough and transparent compliance regime. A call for evidence will be published later this week. The call for evidence will consider the best way to ensure company boards put in place responsible payment practices throughout their supply chain, including whether all company boards should give one of their non-executive directors specific responsibilities for the company's prompt payment performance.

The Small Business Commissioner will join the Prompt Payment Code's Compliance Board to support his role in tackling late payment.

Proposals to help parents and carers in the workforce

Working flexibly helps people to balance their work and home lives and is vital in creating an inclusive economy where those with caring responsibilities can continue working. It also gives employers access to a wider pool of talent and enables better matching of applicants and jobs.

While many companies are increasingly embracing flexible working and the benefits it brings, some employees face barriers in raising this issue with their employers.

The Government will consider creating a duty for employers to consider whether a job can be done flexibly, and make that clear when advertising.

Greater transparency on parental pay

The Government will consult on requiring employers with more than 250 staff to publish their parental leave and pay policies, so job applicants can make informed decisions about whether they can combine the role with caring for their family.

Statutory entitlements to leave and pay for new parents are key to this vision for 'good work' and to the participation and progression of parents, especially mothers, in the labour market.

While many employers go further than the legal minimum for parental leave and

pay, very few publish their policies openly. Applicants must ask prospective employers what the position is which many are reluctant to do for fear of discrimination.

Progress towards a local Industrial Strategy for the West Midlands

The Industrial Strategy sets out a long-term plan to boost the productivity. Supported by our 'policy prospectus', all parts of the country are working towards developing local Industrial Strategies by early 2020.

In consultation with regional partners, the local Industrial Strategy for the West Midlands will harness its distinctive strengths to unlock greater growth and earning power across the region's cities and places. With the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy set for release by March 2019, we are publishing a progress statement showing how local leaders are working with business to maximise the potential of the region and meet national challenges.

The West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy will provide a long-term plan for alignment of local and national decision making to increase productivity and deliver an economy that works for all. This will include how the automotive and wider transport cluster, the life science cluster, and their associated supply chains and infrastructure, will drive the UK's response to the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge and the AI and Data Grand Challenge.