

Media statement, 10 January 2020 - for immediate release

Pivotal welcomes New Decade, New Approach Draft deal offers hope, but big challenges lie ahead

Local health waiting lists are off the scale, our schools system fails many children, and our society is still held back by serious divisions. A major policy overhaul is needed to take on Northern Ireland's problems – it is now up to local politicians to make Stormont work.

The draft deal published by the British and Irish governments offers vital investment and opportunities for reform. It should help tackle the challenges affecting people's lives day and daily.

These challenges were laid bare in Pivotal's first report, '**Moving forward - putting Northern Ireland on track for the future**'. The report, published in November, concluded that Northern Ireland is unprepared for a fast-changing world and that big policy changes are necessary.

Pivotal Director Ann Watt said "Northern Ireland faces serious public policy challenges. Our health service is in crisis, the economy is struggling, poverty and inequality persist, and our society is still held back by serious divisions.

"These problems must be tackled urgently, and meeting them requires a functioning Assembly and Executive. Local politicians must show leadership and front up to the tough decisions that are needed.

"It is pleasing to see that the New Decade, New Approach deal outlines significant steps to address these issues through major investment and reform. This includes urgently needed transformation of health and social care, the necessity of which has been outlined in several reports over the last decade.

"The challenge for politicians and civil servants will be delivering on this ambitious agenda. In the past the Executive has failed in some areas to make the tough choices needed for the long-term.

"Pivotal welcomes the measures to strengthen transparency, accountability and the functioning of the Executive. We also welcome the commitment in the deal to greater civic involvement in policy development, through increased citizen engagement.

Pivotal looks forward to working with government and others on the challenges ahead."

Notes for Editors

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1. Pivotal is the new public policy think tank for Northern Ireland. Pivotal is independent of government and is not politically aligned.
2. Pivotal’s Board of Trustees provides oversight of its work. They are Peter Sheridan (Chair), Chief Executive of Cooperation Ireland; Lisa Faulkner Byrne, Project Coordinator, EPIC; Richard Good, public policy consultant; Olwen Lyner, Chief Executive, NIACRO; Seamus McAleavey, Chief Executive, NICVA; and Alan Whysall, Honorary Senior Research Associate, Constitution Unit, University College London.
3. A wider Reference Group has helped steer the development of Pivotal and will provide ongoing guidance.
4. Pivotal’s Director Ann Watt is a former senior civil servant with 20 years’ experience in public policy development and delivery.
5. Pivotal has received funding and in-kind support from Belfast Harbour Commissioners, The Community Foundation Northern Ireland, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, NICVA, Queen’s University Belfast, Ulster University.
6. For further information about Pivotal see pivotalppf.org or contact Pivotal’s Director Ann Watt on 07932 043835.
7. Follow Pivotal on Twitter [@pivotalppf](https://twitter.com/pivotalppf).