

Petition aims to keep free transport

A petition has been launched calling for free post-16 transport to remain in Northumberland.

Julie Porksen, the Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate for Berwick, has begun campaigning on the back of the Labour run Northumberland County Council's decision to consider bringing in charges for those travelling to post-16 education.

Julie said: "I believe every young person has the right to attend school or college up to age 18 for free. This basic right should be regardless of where they live, or how much money their parents have.

"Everyone should have the same opportunity to get a good education.

"Lib Dems believe that everyone should have the opportunity to get on in life and the education you can access is key. Labour's plans mean that in future, in rural areas some young people may be deprived of this opportunity.

"When I discussed the issue with young people going home from the Duchess' School in Alnwick, many were incredulous that the council was considering charging for their school buses.

"I hope young people, their parents and teachers from across the county will join my campaign and sign the petition to persuade Labour to scrap their plans to charge for school transport."

Warm home for elderly couple

A COUPLE are set to enjoy a warmer year thanks to an initiative to heat up households.

Eileen and Pierce Prosser have received a free central heating system through an energy efficiency partnership involving North Tyneside Council and Warm Zone.

The pair, both in their eighties and who served in the armed forces, have been married for 54 years. They had no central heating and couldn't afford to have it installed. With growing health worries, it was becoming important their ground floor flat was properly heated.

Pierce said: "I contacted Warm Zone to find out if we were eligible - it was so easy. There was not very much disruption at all, the staff cleared up after everything they did; it was a real first class job.

"The difference to our home has been remarkable, a 100% improvement. It has hugely improved our quality of life too."

Coun John Stirling, the council's cabinet member for sustainable development, added: "In North Tyneside, we are committed to tackling fuel poverty and helping our residents take advantage of our scheme.

"I am delighted Mr and Mrs Prosser have benefitted from it."

Dad hits his fundraising target – and keeps going



► TV presenter Ben Shephard with Nadine and Ivan Hollingsworth, holding Seb at Longsands Tynemouth on one of his fundraising challenges

Pic by Paul Norris - NCJ

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INSPIRED father Ivan Hollingsworth has reached his ambitious target to fund play provision at a leading North East hospital.

Ivan has worked tirelessly to raise vital funds for the children's heart unit at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital. In 2009 the hospital saved the life of his son Sebastian, who celebrates his fifth birthday tomorrow, and Ivan and his wife Nadine have vowed to raise cash for the unit ever since.

The couple decided to set up a fund - Seb4Chuf - and have now hit their fundraising target of £333,000 to pay for a modern play facility for the young patients, some of whom spend months in the unit.

It is expected that the groundbreaking for the facility will be this month and the state-of-the-art premises will be completed later this year.

Ivan, 38, from Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, said: "I feel incredibly proud

of what we, and everyone who has helped and donated money, have achieved.

"I want to say the biggest 'thank you' in the world.

"We have a personal reason of raising money because of Seb, but a lot of people have no link to the unit and they have given up so much time and donated money.

"The play room and outside play area is so important. I can't save children's lives as it's the surgeons and the nurses who do that. But what this facility will do is let children be children.

"At some point in the future Seb will undergo further treatment, and he is unlikely to understand what this will involve or why he is so poorly; all he will want to do is play with his friends.

"The play area will hopefully help bring a smile to children's faces at such a difficult time in their lives."

Former professional athlete Ivan, a pharmaceutical rep, has undergone many difficult challenges to help raise vital funds, and last year he was

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Ivan Hollingsworth

made a trustee of the Children's Heart Unit Fund.

The father-of-one has skied down a mountain in a mankini, run 100 miles in less than 24 hours and charged through countless marathons and half marathons for the unit.

In July last year, Ivan led a group of daredevils in an epic Coast to Coast challenge to raise money for the heart unit.

For the fourth consecutive year, he pushed himself to the limit as he and the team braved the exhausting adventure, dubbed C2C4. Over four days, the team cycled 140 miles, ran 61 miles and swam one mile as they travelled from Whitehaven in Cumbria to Tynemouth.

Ivan and Nadine may have hit their fundraising target but Ivan said: "We're not stopping - we're just getting started."

On Monday, he will team up with best friend and TV personality Ben Shephard, along with former Newcastle Falcons rugby star Tom May, to train continuously until they have each burned 10,000 calories.

The trio will be raising money for the Freeman children's heart unit and they will undertake the gruelling challenge at Speedflex Jesmond.

Ben, an ambassador of Speedflex, said: "We reckon it'll take between 12 to 14 hours.

"Each session takes about 45 minutes to complete, but of course as the day wears on we will burn less and less calories as we get more tired and we have less to burn."

Ivan added: "Any pain we will endure is insignificant compared to what heart children deal with every single day."

For more information about seb4chuf or to give a donation visit www.seb4chuf.org.uk

Port of Tyne sponsors academy's F1 team

A TYNESIDE port is helping pupils race to pole position in a prestigious competition.

The Port of Tyne is getting behind Whitburn Academy's Formula One championship dreams when the F1 in schools championship starts again next week, which aims to engage and

make science, technology, maths and engineering fun.

Susan Wear, Port of Tyne's Director of Corporate Affairs, said: "F1 in schools provides a good opportunity for students to develop a wide range of useful skills in an exciting environment. We wish all the teams compet-

ing in the regional round the best of luck."

More than 30 teams from around the North East will be competing at the regional championship that takes place next Tuesday January 14 at the Great North Museum in Newcastle. The team of 10 year 7 and year 8 stu-

dents from Whitburn in South Shields will be UP against some tough competition but believe they have developed a winning F1 car this year.

Headteacher Alan Hardie, said: "We are grateful to the Port of Tyne for their continued support."