Levelling Up Locally

Final report from Onward's
Levelling Up in Practice project

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ONWARD

About Onward

We believe in a mainstream conservatism – one that recognises the value of markets and supports the good that government can do, is unapologetic about standing up to vested interests, and assiduous in supporting the hardworking, aspirational and those left behind. Our goal is to address the needs of the whole country: young as well as old; urban as well as rural; and for all parts of the UK – particularly places that feel neglected or ignored in Westminster. We do this by developing practical policies that work. Our team has worked both at a high level in government and for successful thinktanks. We know how to produce big ideas that resonate with policymakers, the media and the public. We work closely with policymakers of all parties to build coalitions of support. Most importantly, we engage ordinary people across the country and work with them to make our ideas a reality.

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Thanks

We are grateful to the members of the public and local leaders who spoke to us and shared evidence to support the development of this report. Any mistakes remain the authors own.


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Summary of the argument

Levelling up is an ambitious mission. Britain's regional divides have developed over decades, leaving communities fractured and economies hollowed out. Governments of every party and persuasion have made tackling the problem a priority. And yet it persists. The Levelling Up White Paper outlined a new strategy across over 300 pages, combining twelve long-term missions with steps to change how Whitehall works and the creation of new departmental programmes. The Westminster debate has focussed on the national challenge.

But levelling up is inherently local. The problems are most keenly felt in boarded up shops and run down town centres. It is about safe streets and clean parks just as much as increasing productivity and employment. Restoring pride in place and addressing the hyper-local roots of deprivation must be the initial, practical steps towards long-term change. But the practical interventions to kickstart levelling up locally are not well understood and rarely shared. Only by properly diagnosing the problem and developing solutions at a local level can we achieve the national goal.

Onward's *Levelling Up In Practice* programme seeks to address this gap. In 2022 we spent time in areas across the country talking to local leaders and members of the public to understand what mattered to them. Our premise is that while national policy is important, most of the intelligence, levers, and energy to level up are found locally. By identifying and sharing what works in the form of a practical playbook for local leaders, we hope to catalyse progress. This report is the final product of our research programme, and builds on interim case studies of the five areas we spent time in: Oldham, South Tyneside, Walsall, Clacton, and Barry.

Our conversations across the country identified five common challenges. These issues are consistently raised by the public, observable in the data, and stubbornly persist over time:

1. Tackling antisocial behaviour, particularly among young people
2. Bringing life back to high streets and town centres
3. Supporting local sport, culture, heritage and green space
4. Boosting local growth in the private sector
5. Providing community-based support to the most disadvantaged

In every area, these common challenges had particular characteristics and blocked levelling up to differing degrees. In Oldham, antisocial behaviour on public transport restricted connectivity and hollowed out the town centre. In South Tyneside, extreme health inequalities drove economic inactivity and held back industry, while community-assets remained untapped.

And in some of the areas we visited, these five common challenges even varied between neighbourhoods. In Clacton, poverty was concentrated in clusters of streets with poor housing stock and among elderly residents with little family support, both placing high pressure on public services. In Walsall, the drivers of economic inactivity varied from ward to ward between low levels of formal skills, chronic health conditions, ageing workers, and cultural norms in ethnic minority communities.

These two factors - variation in the most pressing barriers to progress *between* areas and the presence of hyper-local challenges *within* areas - point to the need to tackle these challenges locally. We need to level up from the bottom up.

Local leaders face an uphill battle. They are underpowered, with decisions taken too often in Whitehall instead of by communities, councillors or mayors. Local government faces a difficult financial situation, with funding reduced significantly since 2010 and pressures on public services rising. And national policy needs to better support local efforts: other Onward research has set out recommendations aimed at Westminster on topics including growth-enhancing spending, transport, apprenticeships, investment, innovation and schools.

But local progress is already happening. Our research took us to Barry in South Wales, a working-class town already well on its way to being levelled up. The area has seen a major physical regeneration over the last 30 years, with new housing projects on former industrial land developed in partnership between the council and the community. Local entrepreneurs have created new economic and civic assets that have underpinned renewal. Proactive neighbourhood policing has tackled antisocial behaviour and brought back family tourism. Economic plans have harnessed the relationship between Barry and nearby Cardiff, boosting connectivity and creating integrated skills programmes. And the town had luck, gaining fame as the setting for TV show *Gavin and Stacey*.

We have collected the most promising interventions we saw across the country into a practical playbook. We have looked at examples that have worked from local governments led by a variety of political parties. The steps we have set out are low-cost, fast acting, and within the powers currently held by local leaders. They may not solve long-term intractable problems alone, but they can be the first steps. We look forward to working with local leaders across the country to pilot and measure some of these interventions.

Summary: Playbook of Interventions

Challenges	Interventions
1. Tackling antisocial behaviour, particularly among young people	**1.1** Local leaders can collectively identify antisocial behaviour hot spots and focus their resources on solving underlying problems in those areas **1.2** Local leaders can improve safety on buses, trams and trains, as well as public transport stops and stations **1.3** Local leaders can support programmes that divert young people away from antisocial behaviour, including sport, after school clubs, and mentoring
2. Bringing life back to high streets and town centres	**2.1** Councils can issue letters notifying landlords of long-term vacant properties of their intention to trigger a High Street Rental Auction **2.2** Councils can tackle eyesores and derelict buildings through Section 215 notices **2.3** Local leaders can increase collective capacity to improve the public realm through the formation of parish and town councils, Business Improvement Districts and Community Improvement Districts **2.4** Councils can enable the transfer of assets to community ownership **2.5** Local leaders can create thriving town markets
3. Supporting local sport, culture, heritage and green space	**3.1** Local leaders can create Heritage Development Trusts and councils can designate Heritage Action Zones to protect and improve access to heritage assets **3.2** Local leaders can ensure the sustainability of local sports clubs **3.3** Local leaders can create diaspora networks as a way to boost pride of place and increase philanthropic investment **3.4** Councils can support programmes to animate the public realm through culture and art **3.5** Local leaders can create “pocket parks” in urban areas

4. Boosting local growth in the private sector	**4.1** Local leaders can develop hyper-local industrial strategies **4.2** Local leaders can provide targeted business support and advice to tradeable firms with high growth potential **4.3** Local leaders can create new partnerships between businesses, schools, colleges, and universities to boost employment **4.4** Local leaders can increase the supply of employment land by creating Mayoral and Locally Led Development Corporations **4.5** Local leaders can introduce Demand Responsive Transit schemes to boost physical connectivity
5. Providing community-based support to the most disadvantaged	**5.1** Local leaders can create and support networks that build relationships between vulnerable groups like the long-term unemployed **5.2** Local leaders can launch community public health campaigns to increase well-being **5.3** Local authorities can create and expand Family Hubs in their areas **5.4** Local leaders can introduce new forms of community engagement to develop and improve services

Overview of the Levelling Up in Practice programme

The levelling up agenda is about unlocking opportunity in parts of the country that have been left behind for decades. This is not an easy task, and this Government is not the first to attempt it. To date, many of the policies and interventions announced to support levelling up have emanated from Whitehall departments in the form of new funding pots or national policy programmes.

Onward's Levelling Up in Practice programme started from the premise that even if national policy is important, most of the intelligence and energy to level up will be found locally. And while too many policy levers sit in Westminster, there are still important tools available to local councillors, business leaders, and civic groups.

But places' ability to level themselves up is hampered by the fact there is currently no agreed methodology for practical change, and certainly not one rooted in evidence and informed by the views of local communities. In most other policy areas we learn and replicate from what works on the ground, but not when it comes to regeneration.

In some communities positive change is already happening, with inspiring local leaders taking steps to turn around the fortunes of their places. These examples are the exception not the rule, and the replicable lessons from these "bright spots" are not well understood.

This is the problem addressed by Onward's Levelling Up in Practice programme. Working closely with communities, local leaders and businesses, we identified common challenges that attempts to level up needed to tackle. Through this process we developed an approach to using data to diagnose which of these challenges is most pressing in an area, to support local leaders in prioritising their work. And finally we brough together a set of evidence-based and replicable interventions that can be tailored to local contexts to make progress on these challenges.

Our work was rooted in five research visits across the country to areas in need of levelling up: Oldham in the North West, South Tyneside in the North East, Walsall in the West Midlands, Clacton in the East of England, and Barry in South Wales. In each place we spoke with local politicians, business leaders, community groups, and public service leaders, as well as holding focus groups to hear directly from communities themselves. Alongside these structured visits, our work was informed by time spent in other parts of the country throughout 2022 including Barnstaple, Birkenhead, Stourbridge, and Halifax.

The rest of this report looks at three areas in turn: identifying the common challenges we found; using data to prioritise between them; and taking concrete action locally.

Common Challenges, Local Characteristics

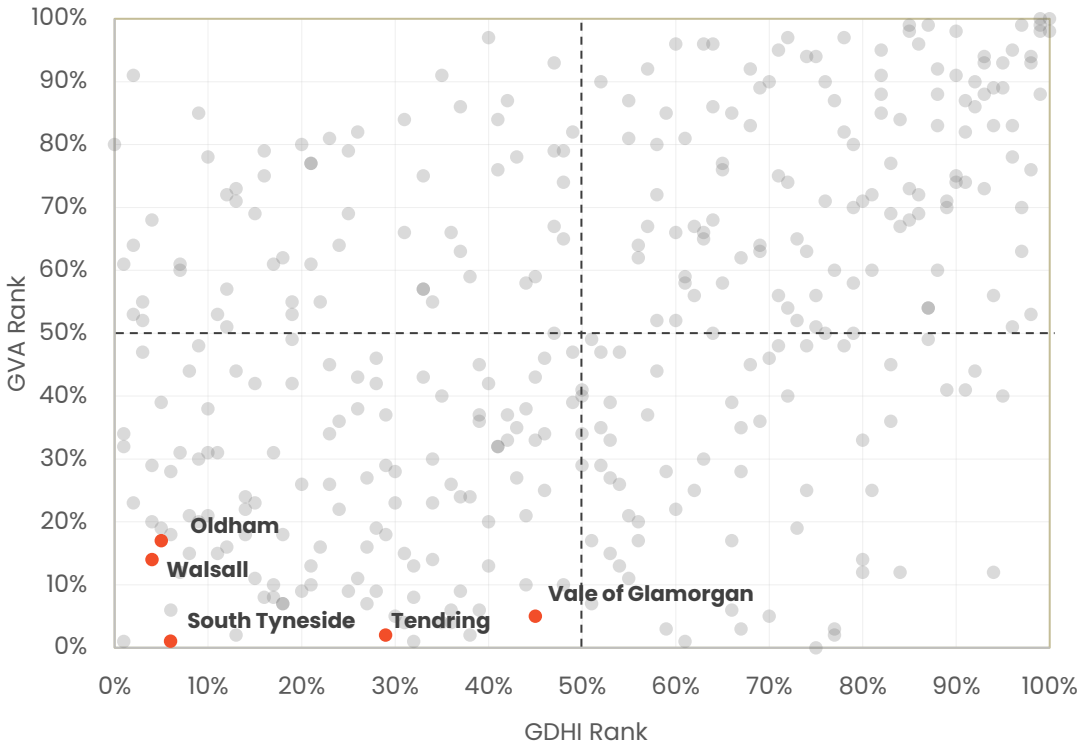
Summary of findings

Every area we focused on for this programme had one thing in common: a high level of economic and social need that holds back opportunity. There will be other parts of the country that will have more acute economic and social challenges, but these five areas provide a good representation of the kinds of places where potential is untapped.

Economically, all are below average in terms of both productivity and material welfare. Oldham, Walsall and South Tyneside were manufacturing epicentres in the 18th century for textiles, leather tack and ships respectively, but are now among the poorest 10% of local authorities in the UK in terms of Gross Disposable Household Income. Tendring and the Vale of Glamorgan fare better in comparison, but our areas of study within these authorities - Clacton-on-Sea and Barry - have comparable disposable incomes to Oldham, Walsall and South Tyneside. In terms of productivity, all areas rank among the least productive 20% of local authorities in the UK, as measured by Gross Value Added per capita.

Figure 1: Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita vs Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) per capita, in percentile ranks

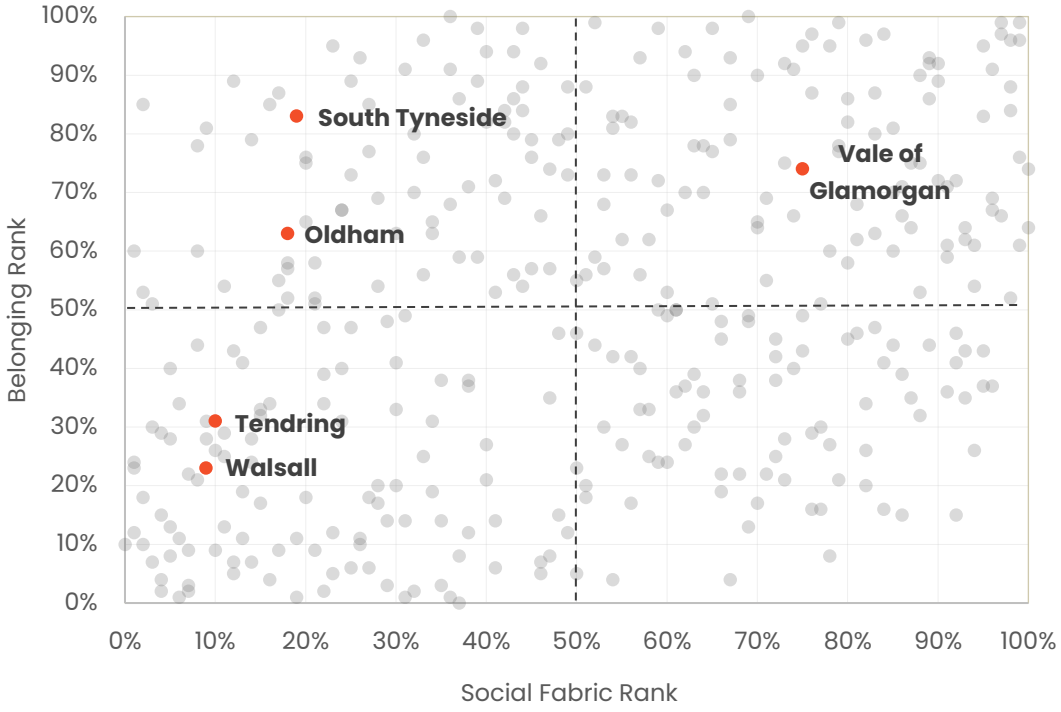
Source: ONS Regional Accounts, 2019, Onward analysis



These places also have a weak social fabric. Every area apart from the Vale of Glamorgan has a low score on Onward's social fabric index, which includes data on volunteering, membership of local groups, the physical infrastructure of places like shops and green spaces, trust in civic institutions, crime rates and family formation. Again, strong scores for the Vale of Glamorgan overall obscure challenges in Barry, where our work was focussed. Comparing each area to their corresponding regional

averages also gives important context. While South Tyneside and Tendring have social fabric scores that are fairly representative of the North East and East of England respectively, Walsall and Oldham have some of the lowest social fabric scores in their regions. When it comes to reported levels of belonging, areas in the North of England characteristically have higher scores than parts of the South and Midlands.

Figure 2: Belonging Scores vs Social Fabric, in percentile ranks
Source: Onward Social Fabric data 2020, Understanding Society 'Belonging' scores, Onward analysis



As we spent time in these areas, speaking to local leaders and residents, five common challenges and priorities began to emerge. They differed in severity, and all had local features and characteristics, but these five problems nonetheless crystallised the longer we inquired about what was needed to level up.

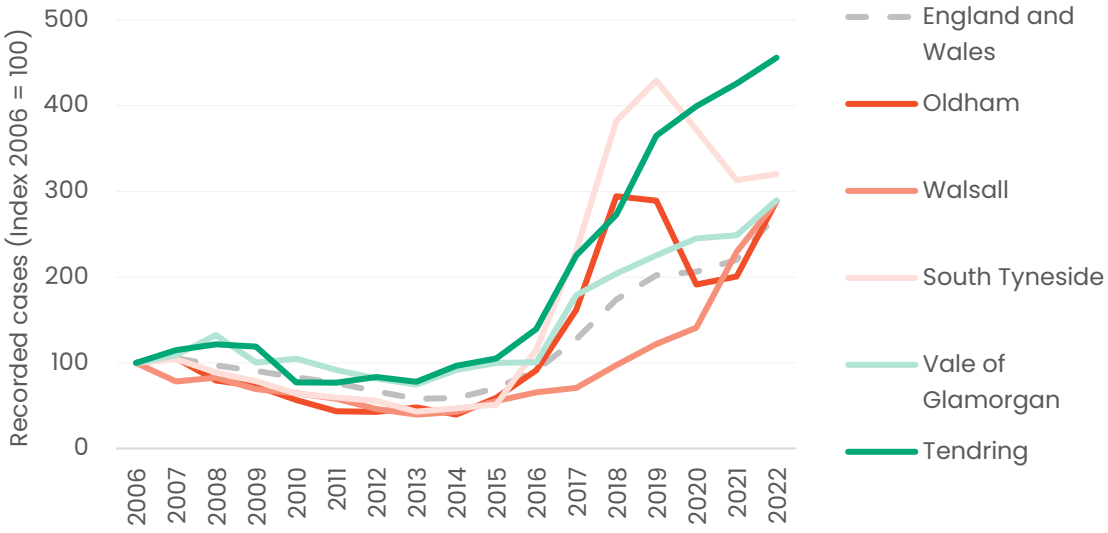
These five local priorities are rooted in the practical and everyday challenges that the public and local leaders want to see addressed. Alone, they will not be sufficient to reverse decades of diverging economic and social outcomes across the country. Onward has written extensively on some of the large-scale systemic changes that are needed- including on apprenticeships, devolution, innovation, foreign direct investment, local government finance, tax, and schools. All of these measures are necessary, but they will take time. The five priorities outlined here are areas where both local and national governments can make tangible progress more rapidly. To succeed, the Government needs to level up fast *and* slow. These five areas should be the focus for levelling up fast.

1. Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, particularly among young people

Frustrations with high levels of crime are about losing control. In Oldham, large numbers of young people congregating around tram stops and harassing passengers stopped people using public transport: one told us "you take your life in your hands for a £3.60 return". In Clacton, groups of men drinking around the fountain in the town square drove away both residents and potential visitors. In Walsall, some neighbourhoods had gained such a reputation for violence and intimidation that residents didn't feel they were able to drive through them. In all of these examples, the local residents felt powerless.

The data supports these claims. Public order offences today are 4.4 times higher in the area around Clacton than they were in 2015, compared to a roughly 2.5 times increase across England and Wales. Figure 3 shows how all the areas we visited reported growth in public order offences higher than the national average from 2006 to 2022. And this only captures a portion of antisocial behaviour in local areas, much of which is not reported to the police but to local authorities or other public bodies who come together in Community Safety Partnerships. And much antisocial behaviour is never officially reported at all, particularly where the public don't have confidence anything will be done. Many of the areas that we spent time in report lower levels of trust in the police compared to the UK average, as shown in Figure 4.

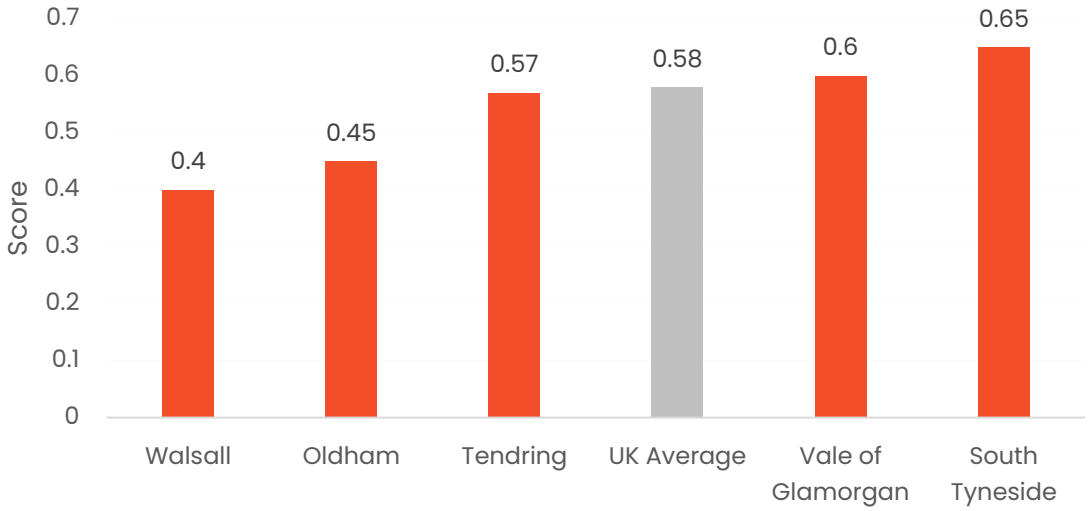
Figure 3: Number of recorded public order offences, 2006-22 (Index 2006 = 100)
Source: Home Office police recorded crime by Community Safety Partnership, Onward analysis



**Note: The above data is by Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which equate in the majority of instances to local authorities. The England and Wales total in this figure is that of CSPs, which is different to total crime in England and Wales as it does not account for British Transport Police data and areas not covered by CSPs.*

Figure 4: Trust in Police scores

Source: Onward Social Fabric data 2020



**Note: The Survey question asked "I will name a list of institutions. For each, please indicate whether you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it."*

In almost every area we spent time in, this put tackling crime and reducing antisocial behaviour as the public's top priority for levelling up. This often came as a shock to local leaders, particularly elected councillors. They may have been aware of crime as one challenge among many, but didn't see it as the key factor holding them back. But for members of the public, feeling safe on the streets was an essential foundation to other routes to regeneration: commuting to better paying jobs, spending money in shops or restaurants in the town centre, or becoming a member of a new community group.

Frustrations around antisocial behaviour focused on young people. Some of this criticism is to be expected: research has shown that older generations have always felt younger generations are disrespectful or unruly.[1] But concern was often the key message, not criticism. In Oldham, members of the public didn't blame young people for loitering, but pointed to the lack of youth services or sports clubs to engage with. In each area we conducted an exercise where we asked focus group participants to form a "levelling up taskforce" and recommend three concrete actions they would introduce to improve their town. "More activities for young people" was a top recommendation in every single area we visited.

A perceived lack of community policing made people feel unsafe. People we spoke to recognised that there were real pressures on police funding and numbers, and were quick to support individual officers they knew in their areas. But they felt that overall the police didn't have time to patrol the streets or tackle "low-level crimes" that affected them. In both Walsall and South Tyneside, the recent closures of local police stations were seen as a symbolic retreat by police forces from their towns.

2. Bringing life back to high streets and town centres

Town centres are symbolic of an area's fortunes. Residents often rush to tell you about their pride in past glories. In Oldham it was Tommyfield Market: the first place in the country to sell fish and chips. In South Tyneside it was King Street, which one business leader told us had commanded the highest retail rents in the country in the 1980s.

Today, the same phrases are used to describe town centres in the places most in need of levelling up: "run down", "grim", "lost", "tired", "bleak". Data indicates that the areas we visited, plus places the Government has prioritised for levelling up, have particularly high vacancy rates. Even where town centre premises were not vacant, they were more likely to be charity stores or betting shops than independent cafes or big brands.

Figure 5: Vacancy rates for leisure and rental units, 2021
Source: Whythawk commercial location data, Onward analysis

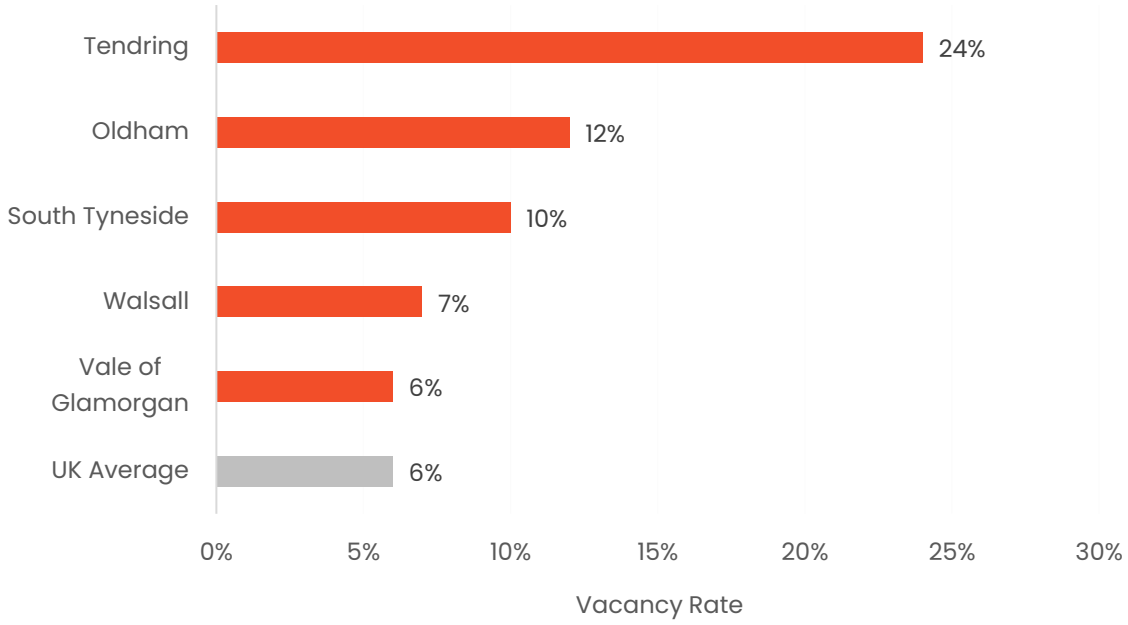
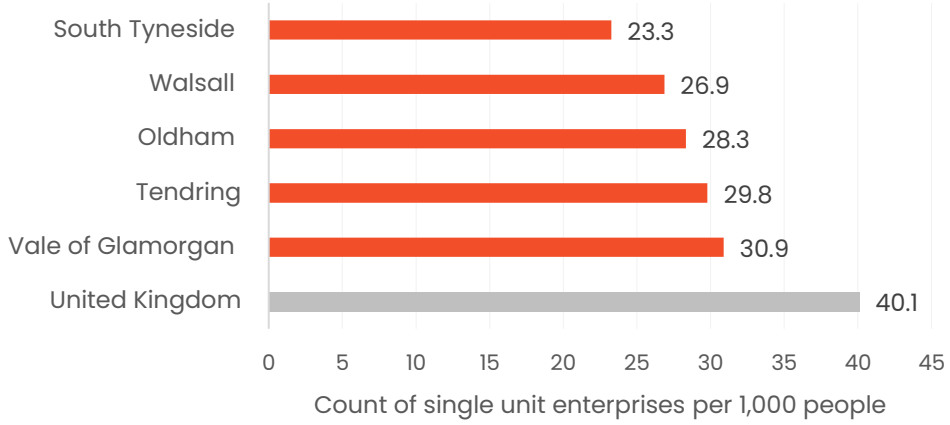


Figure 6: Number of independent businesses per 1,000 population, 2020
Source: ONS data on number of businesses operating a single site, Onward analysis



Residents acknowledged that the struggling town centre hadn't been the main driver of their area's decline. They were also open eyed about the fact that online retail and out of town shopping had hit high streets everywhere. But residents looked with envy to nearby areas where the town centre was seen to be doing well: in Oldham they pointed to Rochdale, in Walsall to Lichfield, in Clacton to Wivenhoe. And they felt that if local leaders had given up on the town centre, then they'd given up on the area as a whole. What all of these criticisms point to is the failure of some town centres to act as a genuine hub of activity where residents want to spend time, meet people, eat, live, and work.

Beyond the symbolic value of town centres, our research highlighted their economic importance. Low levels of footfall and spend in town centres meant that bars, restaurants, and shops struggled to pay good wages and stay afloat. Low quality office space meant that businesses didn't want to locate and grow near amenities - in South Tyneside we heard that one small design business had located on King Street, but felt embarrassed to bring clients there and so were looking for new premises in another town. Barry provided a promising town centre for economic development, with investments in the waterfront area supporting independent cafes and co-working spaces for creative businesses.

Town centres offered an important forum for strengthening an area's social fabric, through shared spaces and rituals that brought together different parts of the community.[2] Markets were a common bright spot: Tommyfield Market in Oldham was described as "buzzing" with activity in the past and served as a weekly destination for people in surrounding neighbourhoods. The relocation of Walsall market by the council away from the centre of town was seen by residents as a mistake that took away an important meeting place. Our "levelling up taskforce" exercise almost always generated the idea that councils should subsidise small businesses looking to locate in their area. Town centres that bring people together were seen to foster a sense of belonging.

Residents' also wanted to see improvements to the state of the public realm. Sometimes these were small, like overflowing bins on street corners or graffiti on bus stations. Other times it was more significant, like burned out buildings or boarded up shop fronts. All of these signs of blight served as a regular visual reminder to members of the public of the decline of their area. And residents were clear that they wanted their town centre to have a distinctive character - to be "somewhere" and not just "anywhere". Details and beauty mattered. Where heritage and local designs had been maintained, they were noticed and commented on. Where they had been replaced by faceless developments, they were missed.

Some saw physical decline as a result of a broader moral decline and a lack of pride in the community. Focus group participants argued that people were more willing to drop litter or fly tip than they were in the past, and that this was a sign that people no longer cared. Others pointed to council failings, arguing that they weren't investing in the town like they should. This criticism was particularly pointed when some areas were kept up more effectively than others - in both South Tyneside and Clacton, members of the public resented the amount of care that went into the waterfront for visitors when the residential areas a few roads away looked far less pristine.

3. Supporting local sport, culture, heritage and green space

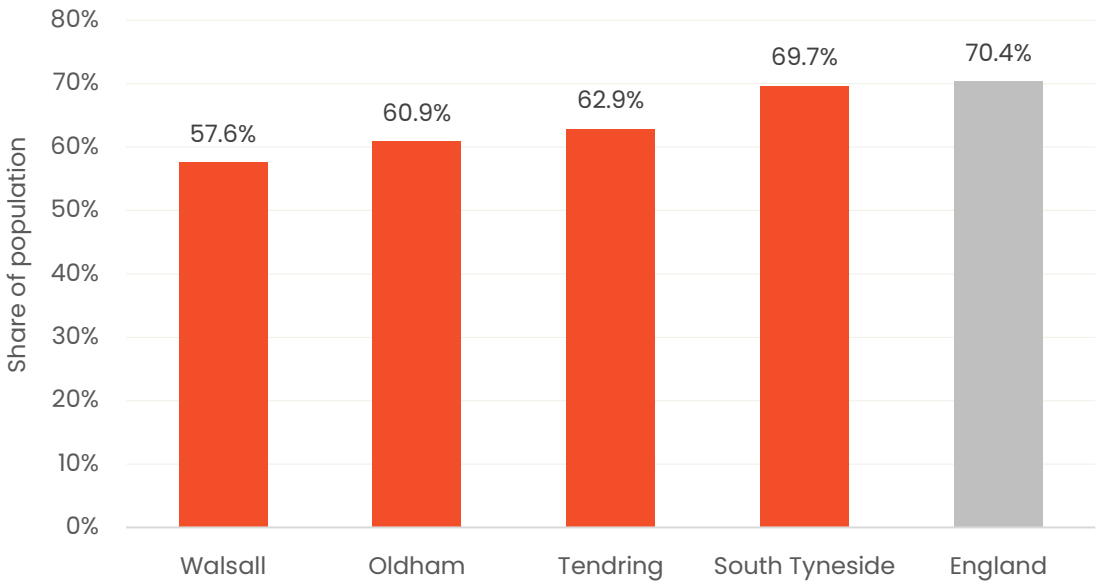
The parts of a place that generate pride are often rooted in culture and history. In Walsall, residents pointed towards the local leather museum that charts the area's industrial past, or the Arboretum in the centre of the town that was first made a public park in 1870. In Clacton, locals spoke about the Pier, which has been in operation since 1871 and used to attract visitors from across the country to shows featuring killer whales and dolphins. In South Tyneside one resident pointed to the town hall as an impressive heritage asset, saying "we have a gorgeous town hall, I'm proud of that, I deliberately take the long way to drive past it". These deep roots make pride in place difficult to generate quickly, putting a premium on protecting it where it exists.

Sport has a particular resonance when it comes to levelling up. When we asked people in Oldham to explain their area's fortunes, they pointed to Oldham Athletic and Oldham RFC as an analogy for the area's decline. Oldham Athletic in particular were on the route to relegation, making them the first team who had played in the Premier League to be demoted from the EFL. Residents saw this misfortune, driven by speculative foreign ownership and poor stewardship, as robbing them of a source of pride and shared identity. In contrast, South Tyneside hosted South Shields FC who had invested heavily in community facilities to support local residents. In Oldham, the formation of a kabaddi league had created a new avenue for South Asian

communities to come together and celebrate their culture. Overall, the facilities to support these activities were lacking - densities of both leisure facilities and green spaces in all the areas we visited were below national averages.

Where shared cultural events took place, they were a source of local pride and gave areas an economic boost. The Clacton Air Show which attracted around 250,000 visitors a year was cited by numerous local leaders and focus group participants as a rare positive aspect of the area's economy. The "GlastonBarry" festival in Barry was also highly spoken of as an event which brought people together. But these sorts of activities were broadly lacking in the places we visited. Despite the presence of the New Art Gallery in Walsall, the area has one of the lowest rates for cultural participation in the country.[3]

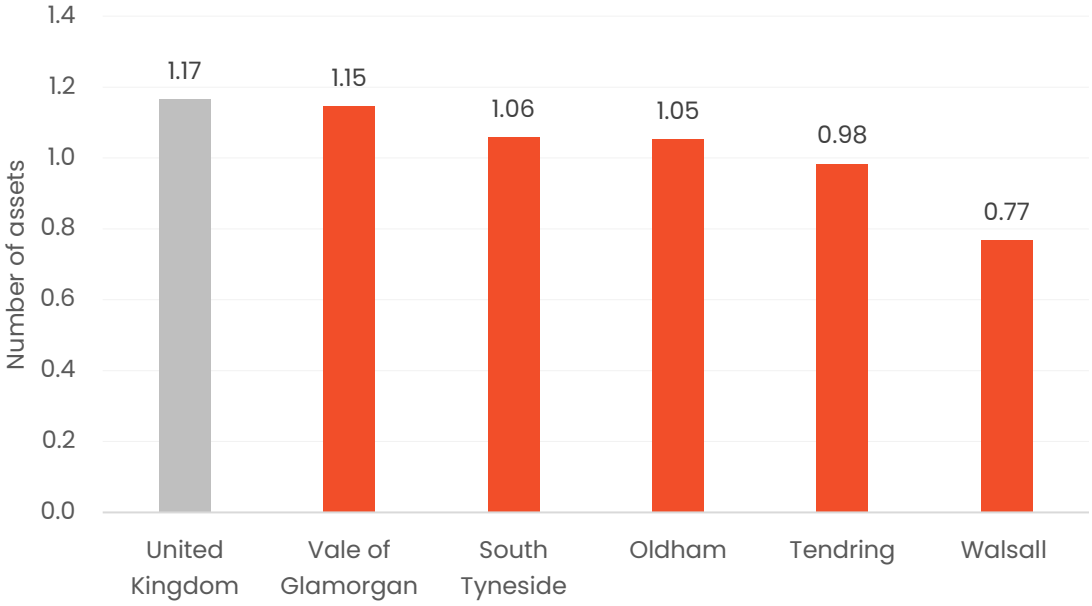
Figure 7: Share of population that have participated in arts or cultural activities, 2017
Source: Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey 2015-17



**Note: Directly comparable data for Wales on this measure is not available, but a similar measure on participation in arts and culture activities can be found here. The data for all English authorities measure the share of population that have participated in an arts or cultural activity at least once between 2015-2017.*

Figure 8: Local Assets per 1000 population, 2022

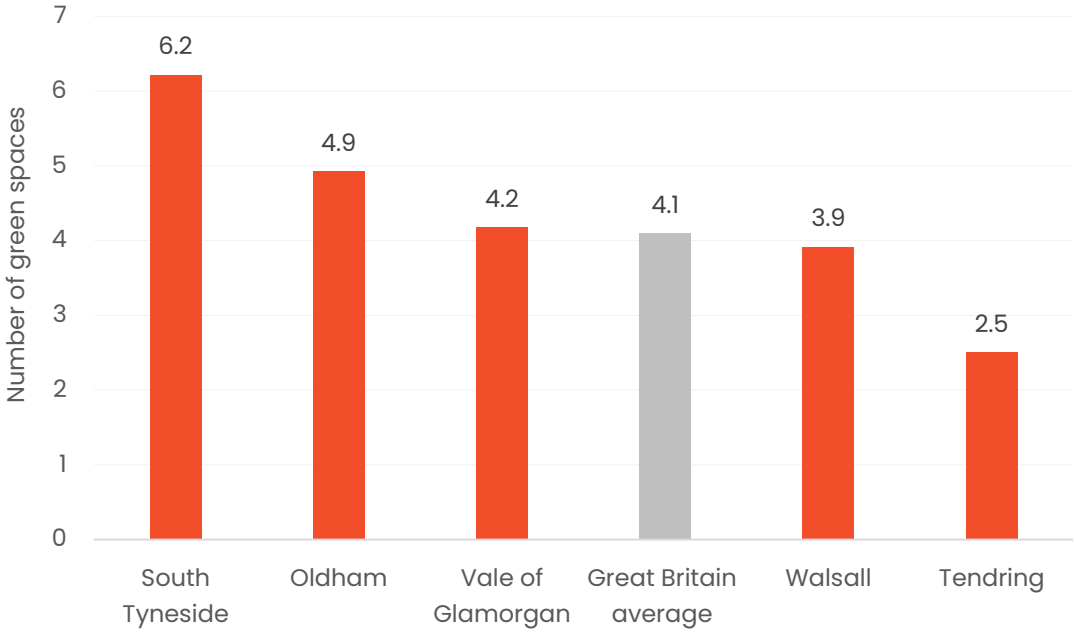
Source: ONS UK Business Counts – local units by industry, Onward analysis



*Note: Local assets here refers to a cumulative count of recreation and leisure centres, sports and fitness clubs, libraries, and pubs, filtered using 2007 Standard Industry Codes (SIC).

Figure 9: Average number of green spaces within a 1km radius

Source: ONS Analysis of Ordnance Survey data, April 2020



*Note: Green spaces here refer to parks, public gardens and playing fields

4. Boosting local growth in the private sector

Stagnant economic growth sits underneath many of the problems faced in left-behind areas. Some parts of the Midlands, the North, and Wales have been hit particularly hard by deindustrialisation, like the decline of the collieries in South Tyneside, manufacturing in Walsall and Oldham, or the docks in Barry. In coastal communities like Clacton the decline of domestic tourism has had a profound impact on the local economy. In all of the areas we spent time in for our research, a struggling private sector has generated too few jobs, offering too little pay, with limited opportunities for progression.

In the UK, most levers affecting economic policy sit in Westminster. Local councils and regional mayors have a limited ability to raise and direct tax revenues, and tightly controlled powers in areas like adult skills or infrastructure investment. Unlike other developed economies, most decisions on industrial policy are taken at the national level, including the design and delivery of business support programmes, the provision of trade support, and investment in translational research. Onward have argued in other research papers that this needs to change.[4]

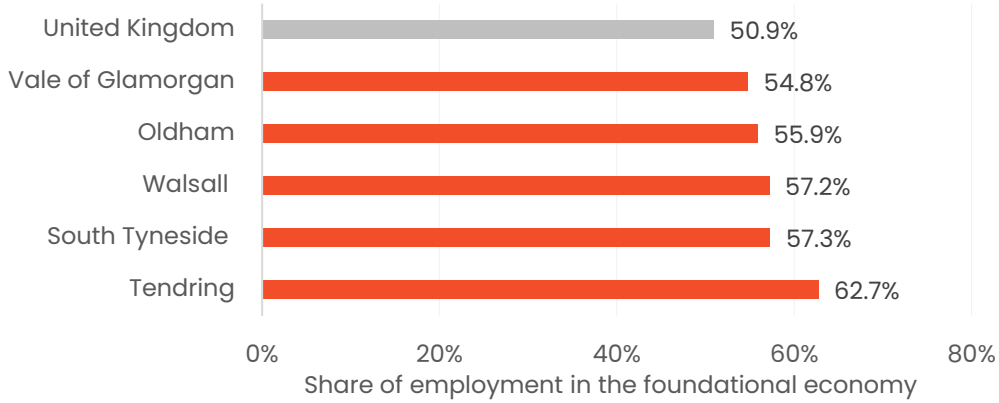
But local leaders do have a role to play in growing the local private sector. And members of the public expect them to take action. In our focus groups, participants regularly held the council responsible for the closure of key businesses or the lack of new job opportunities. And business leaders were also clear that they felt councillors could be doing more to support their expansion and recruitment. So where should local leaders direct their attention in promoting growth?

The foundational economy in struggling areas is crucial, comprising both businesses that cater to the local population like shops and restaurants as well as parts of the public sector. As noted above, the lack of a strong leisure offer is a major barrier to levelling up when it blights high streets and fails to provide things to do for young people and families. And an effective public sector and social care sector provide essential services to vulnerable groups - as is discussed in more detail below.

Local leaders have a crucial role to play in growing tradable sectors: the portion of local economies that produces services or goods that cater to other parts of the country or internationally, bringing in investment and jobs. Without a tradable economy, areas are reliant on employers that are either part of the public sector or are commissioned by it, including colleges, hospitals, or local authorities. These organisations can play a crucial role as anchor institutions. But on their own, they leave areas reliant on re-circulating limited public funds. We saw this most clearly in Oldham, where the public sector had grown to have an outsized role in the local economy alongside low-wage sectors like retail and social care.

Figure 10: Share of employment in the foundational economy, 2021

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey data, 2021



**Note: The foundational economy comprises sectors that are involved in the production of goods and services that are consumed by all on a daily basis. This includes the material sectors (such as cable utilities and supermarkets), public services (such as health, education and police), and supplementary sectors (such as clothing and furniture). For more information see here.*

We observed two main obstacles to the growth of the local economy. The first was the lack of a clear area of comparative economic advantage or a nascent industrial cluster with the opportunity to grow. Areas like Oldham and Clacton had some highly productive firms, but no clear strategy for which sectors or industrial opportunities were going to generate jobs in the future. Both areas would rely on strong connections to nearby cities, particularly Manchester in the case of Oldham, or to nearby industrial centres, like the Freeport at Harwich in the case of Clacton. But commuter roles would need to be complimented by local industries and there appeared to be no collective vision amongst civic or business leaders about where efforts would be focussed. This lack of clarity extended to members of the public, who were not clear where future jobs were coming from. One focus group participant in Clacton told us "If you were looking for a decent job, say you were fresh out of university, you need to be able to travel, you're looking at Colchester, Chelmsford or commuting into London."

The second challenge was the lack of a plan to realise industrial opportunities. In South Tyneside, civic and business leaders had focussed on private sector growth around decarbonisation, particularly renewables and advanced manufacturing. But there were significant challenges in realising the potential of these firms and sectors. Land supply was limited, with the council lacking the tools to remediate brownfield land and assemble new sites. Recruitment was challenging given limited coordination between employers, schools, colleges, and universities. And public awareness of these new opportunities was low, with focus group participants telling us that all new jobs were in shops, restaurants, or distribution warehouses, unaware that the world's largest offshore wind farm was 150 kilometres off the coast.

These twin challenges - articulating and then pursuing private sector growth opportunities - need to be addressed to generate the local wealth that underpins levelling up.

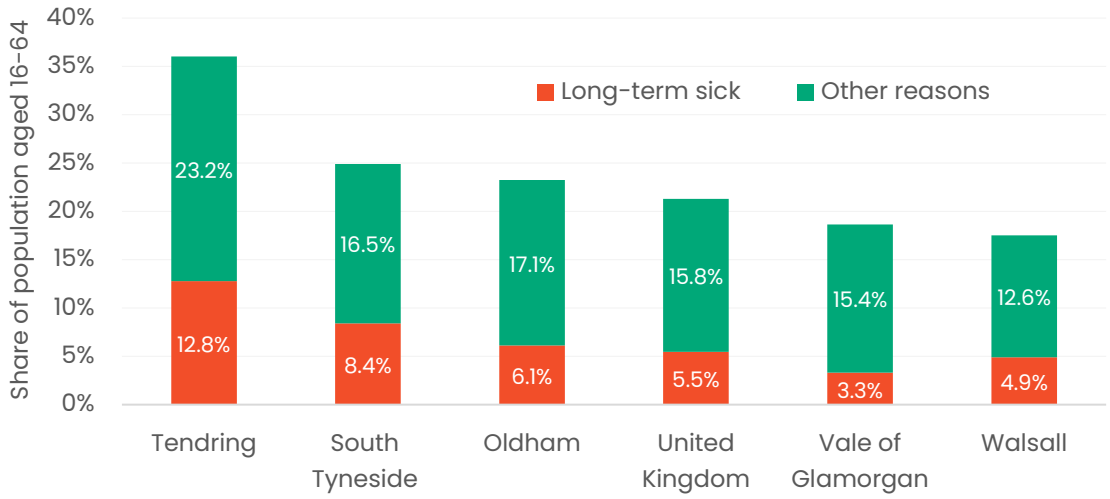
5. Providing community-based support to the most disadvantaged

All of the areas we focused on had pockets of severe deprivation. In South Tyneside, local leaders told us about challenges "behind closed doors" including multigenerational unemployment, drug abuse, and domestic violence. In Walsall, life expectancy differed across the borough by almost thirty years. In Jaywick Sands, an area neighbouring Clacton, individuals living in extreme poverty were housed in post-war beach huts that are in an advanced state of decay.

Deprivation was often hyper-local. High levels of need at an aggregate level disguised hyper-local differences in both the nature and degree of vulnerability. In Walsall, economic inactivity in the more economically deprived north of the borough was high, at around 1 in 3 adults out of employment compared to 1 in 4 nationally. In the south of the borough it was lower overall, but extremely high among women with 45% out of employment, driven by cultural norms in a largely South Asian community. Tackling worklessness in Walsall would be difficult to deliver effectively at the local authority level, let alone the regional or national level..

Figure 11: Levels of economic inactivity, and reason cited

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey 2021, Onward analysis



As well as being hyper-local, these problems often occur in communities that are least engaged with the public sector. In South Tyneside, community leaders expressed their frustration at Department for Work and Pensions contracts that span the whole North East, giving limited flexibility for small civic groups to bid to deliver employment support. One community leader expressed her frustration at the local council's approach during the pandemic, saying "all the officers went home during covid, and closed their doors, and reinvented the wheel". In Oldham, we heard that the involvement of councillors in the Big Local community project had started to politicise funding and undermined efforts by residents.

But even if the public sector more actively commissioned civil society groups, in many areas there would be insufficient capacity within the third sector. While in Oldham we heard about a "reserve army" of community groups, in some of the areas we visited we found a lower density of charities compared to the UK average. In many areas local groups struggled to organise given the absence of hyper-local governance like parish councils or neighbourhood associations.

Figure 12: Count of charities per 1,000 population, 2022
Source: The Charity Commission for England and Wales, Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, Onward analysis

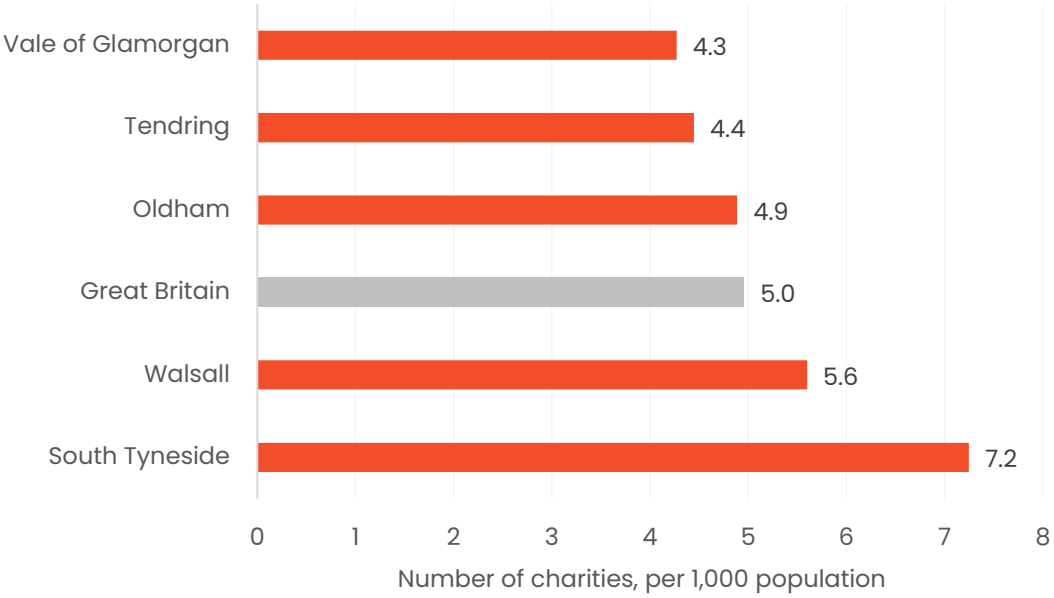
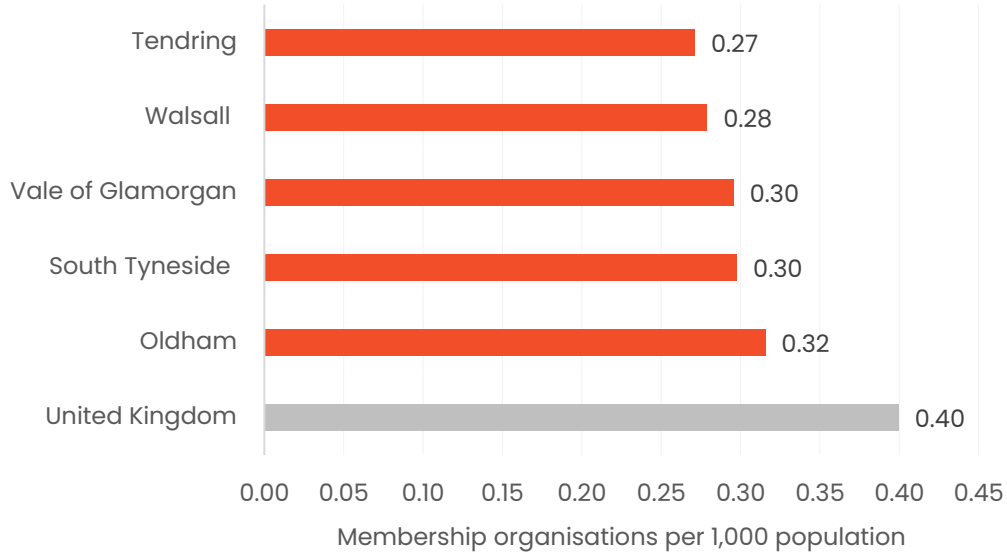


Figure 13: Membership organisations per 1,000 population, 2022

Source: ONS UK Business Counts – local units by industry, Onward analysis



**Note: According to the 2007 Standard Industrial Codes (SIC), membership organisations are those representing interests of special groups or promoting ideas to the general public, on topics such as politics and business and trade. See here for more information.*

Identifying which challenge is the binding constraint to levelling up

Our research suggested to us that far from all areas in need of levelling up being entirely different, all faced these five common challenges which were prioritised by the public. These common challenges represent only a portion of the problems that need to be solved in order to close long-term performance gaps between struggling areas and the rest of the country. Many of the steps to close these gaps will rest on national policy, particularly around the economy and public services, and will take decades.

What these five challenges represent instead are areas where local leaders have the insight and levers to make real progress in the short term. Resources will be a challenge: many councils have seen significant funding cuts and are facing rising pressures from ageing populations and expanding responsibilities. But if prioritised and approached through partnership, these are the areas where progress can be demonstrated to members of the public, building confidence and creating hope. These are the conditions in which the long and difficult work of levelling up can succeed. It is only by combining these different steps - local and national, fast and slow, social and economic - that levelling up will succeed.

While these challenges are common between areas, they differ in degree. In each place we visited, one or two of these challenges served as a "binding constraint" to levelling up: an issue which, if unaddressed, limited the ability to make progress. In Oldham, for example, antisocial behaviour and crime served as the key barrier. Without giving residents confidence to walk the streets, local leaders won't be able to increase high street footfall or boost the number of commuters into higher-paying jobs in the city centre. In South Tyneside, the binding constraint appeared to be the high levels of economic inactivity and long-term ill health. Despite the council developing a strong local economic strategy, high-growth businesses struggled to recruit their workforce from the local area.

These binding constraints are not always the same across an area. As mentioned above, in Walsall challenges with economic inactivity manifested very differently across the borough. In Clacton, the need for community support to tackle deprivation was particularly acute in Jaywick Sands but the lack of a local economic strategy was a barrier to progress in the town centre. So, binding constraints might differ both *between* areas and *within* areas.

Identifying these binding constraints should be the first step for local leaders. It is an area where they have a distinct advantage over Whitehall, and identifying one or two problems to solve is the first step in forming a coherent strategy. Using local intelligence will be a large part of prioritising problems and developing this strategy. In our research we found that qualitative interviews, informal conversations, and time spent physically walking around an area helps develop a hypothesis about the core challenges that need focus.

But qualitative insight is insufficient on its own. Local leaders should use data to confirm their hypothesis, and target interventions on particular groups or neighbourhoods to address binding constraints. It is to this data diagnostic approach that this report now turns.

Prioritising and focussing

Data diagnostic approach

This chapter offers practical support to local leaders who want to understand the barriers to levelling up their area. All of the data that we are recommending for use is publicly available, and a data manual in the appendix of this report gives guidance on how to analyse it. Each of our research visits used a version of this data summary, which we adjusted and adapted based on the challenges and opportunities that were surfaced in our qualitative work.

Throughout this section we've selected an area that is commonly discussed as part of the levelling up debate - Blackpool - in order to illustrate what the data looks like for a particular local authority in the UK.

Starting out: Relative social and economic strength

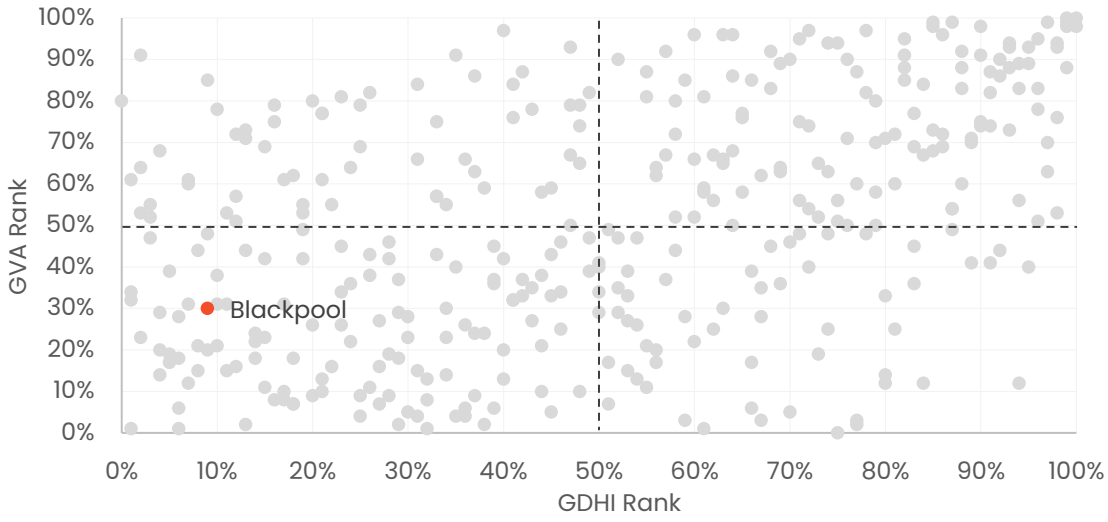
A core aim of levelling up is bringing parts of the country that are left behind toward national averages. So understanding which areas are below average, and in which ways, is a useful starting point.

Throughout our Levelling Up In Practice programme we have made use of two graphs that rank areas in terms of national percentiles on two metrics, and then split them into quadrants based on whether they are above or below national averages.

The first is for the relative strength of the economy. This plots Gross Disposable Household Income per capita, as a measure of economic welfare, against Gross Value Added per worker, as a measure of economic productivity. This helps to distinguish between dense urban areas that might have lots of productive firms but poorer households, and commuter areas that are the inverse.

Figure 14: Gross Domestic Household Income (GDHI) vs Gross Value Added (GVA), per capita, in percentile ranks

Source: ONS Regional Accounts, 2019, Onward analysis



The second is for the relative strength of society. This plots "Belonging" scores from the Understanding Society survey, a measure of pride in place, with Onward's Social Fabric Index, comprising a wider set of indicators of civic strength.

Figure 15: Social Fabric Index vs Belonging Score, 2020

Source: Understanding Society Belonging Scores, Onward Social Fabric data, Onward analysis

Together, these two graphs give a sense of an area's strengths and weaknesses, and begin a process of identifying particular binding constraints. An area with low productivity but high levels of belonging would benefit from further investigation into its economic foundations. An area with high household income but low levels of belonging may want to look at data on the resilience of the high street or participation in cultural activities and civic life.

Before turning to these more specific measures of an area's binding constraints, it's important to look at hyper-local measures to understand the spatial dynamics of an area's challenges.

Focussing in: Neighbourhood level measures

Ideally, every levelling up measure would be displayed on a map. In practice, a lack of available data at the hyper-local level can get in the way of granular insights.

Key maps that every local leader should consult include measures of:

1. **Economic output** - which neighbourhoods are generating wealth?
2. **Income** - which areas have the highest levels of poverty and which have the highest earners?

3. **House Prices** - what are average house prices across the area?
4. **Social Trust** - which areas have the strongest connections between people?
5. **Deprivation** - which areas have the greatest levels of social need in areas like health?

Figure 16: Gross Value Added by Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in Blackpool
Source: ONS UK small area gross value added (GVA) estimates, 2020

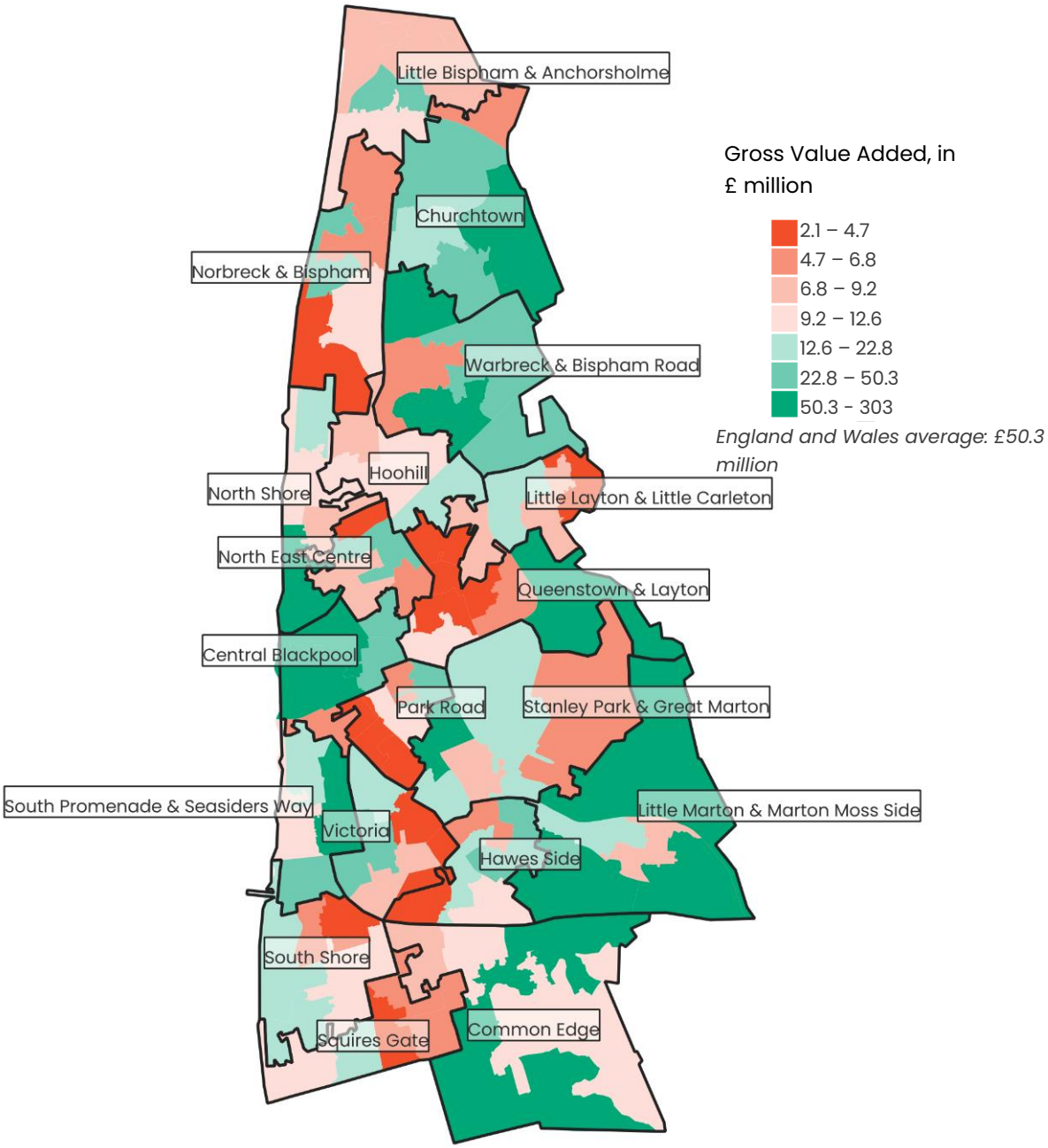
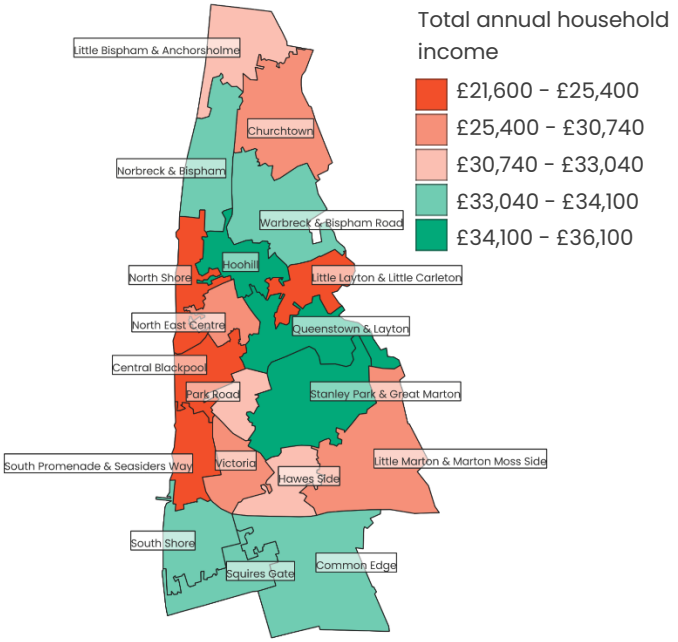


Figure 17: Total annual household income by Middle-layer Super Output Area in Blackpool

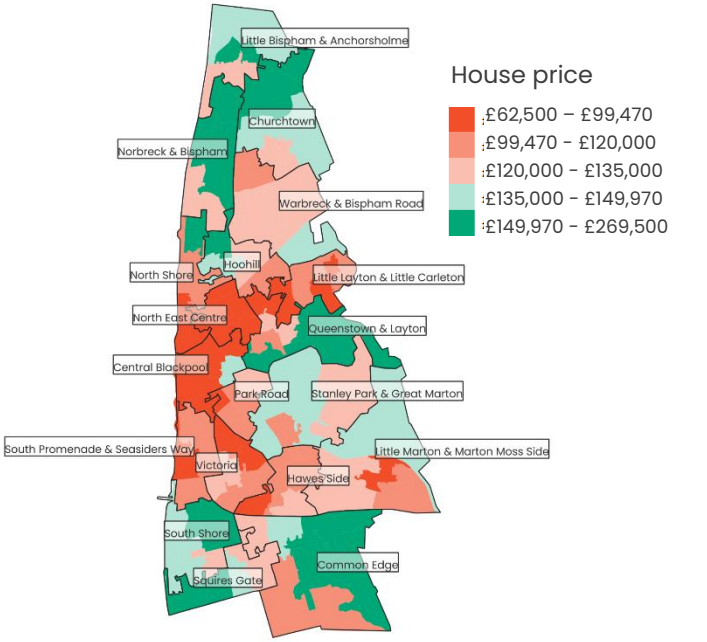
Source: ONS dataset on income estimates for small areas, 2018



England & Wales median: £42,400

Figure 18: Median house prices by Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in Blackpool

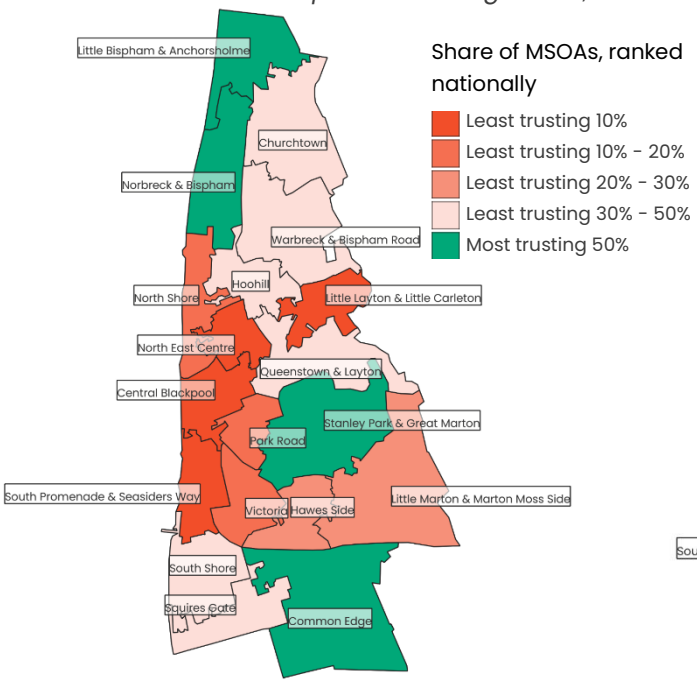
Source: House Price Statistics for Small Areas, Table 46, 2022



Median house price, England and Wales: £263,500

Figure 19: Net trust by MSOA in Blackpool

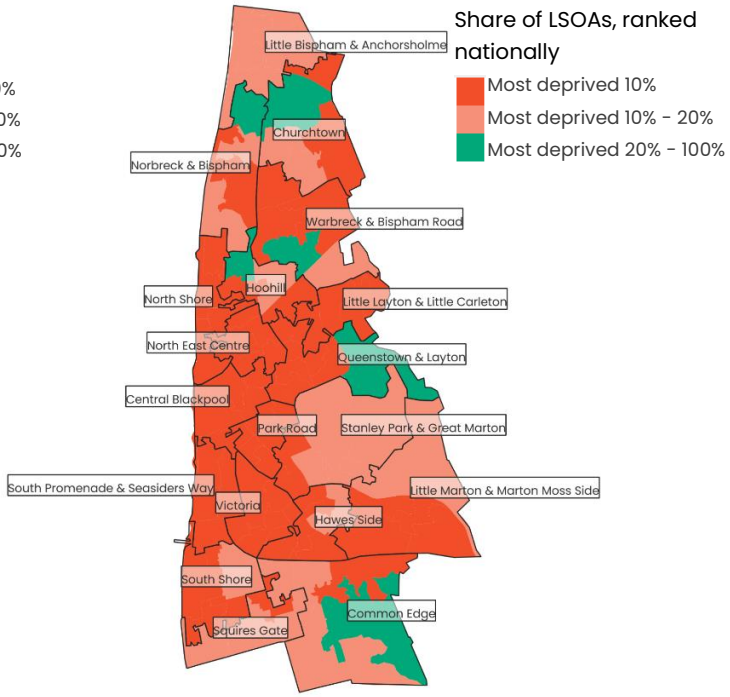
Source: Onward report 'Good Neighbours,' 2023



Note: 'Net trust' here measures the difference between those who said they always or usually trust their neighbours and those who said they are always or usually careful about their neighbours.

Figure 20: Health deprivation and disability in Blackpool by LSOA

Source: English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019



Working through: Measures for the five common challenges

After gaining a relative understanding of an area's economic and social strengths, and a spatial understanding of hyperlocal challenges, local leaders can turn to examining which of the five common challenges might be a binding constraint to levelling up.

1. Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, particularly among young people

Crime data is widely available at a local authority level. For our analysis, we have used Office for National Statistics data on the number of reports for the types of offences we heard about most from local leaders. Our charts look at both the changing levels of reports within an area, and how that differs from regional and UK averages.

Figure 21: Recorded cases of crime in Blackpool, by type of crime, 2006-22
Source: Home Office police recorded crime by Community Safety Partnership, Onward analysis

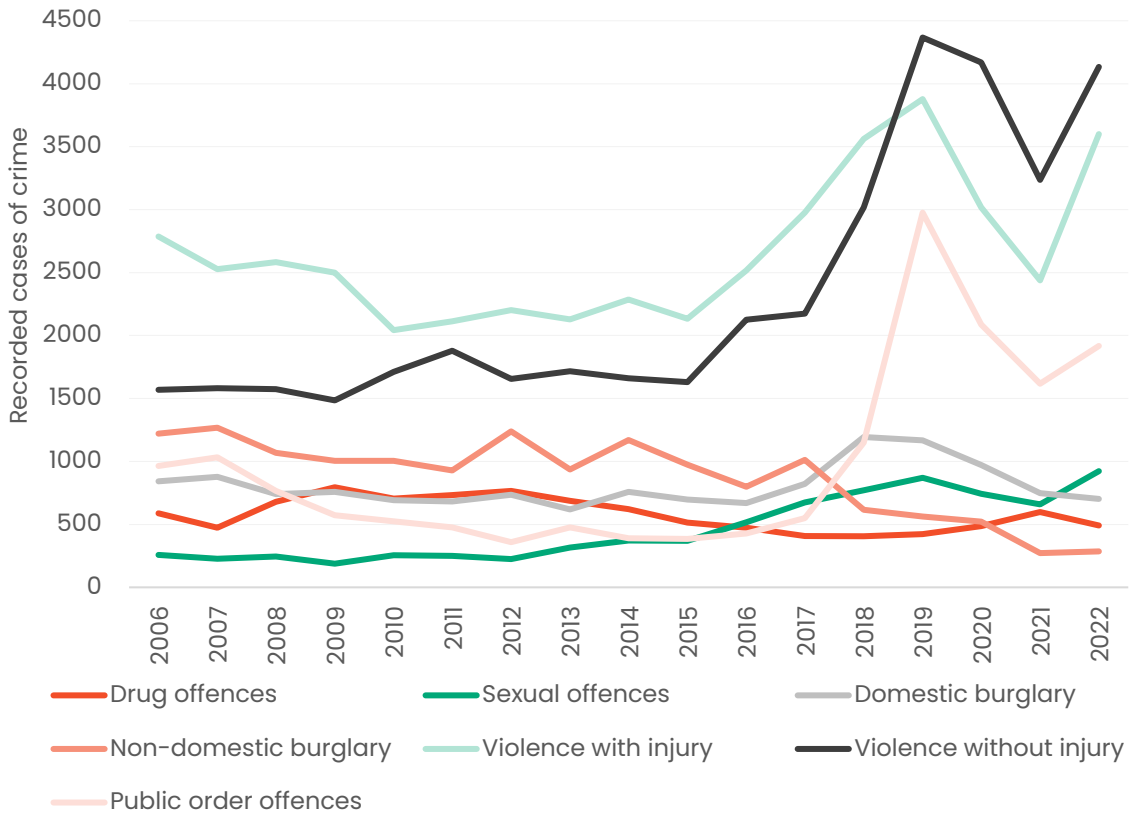
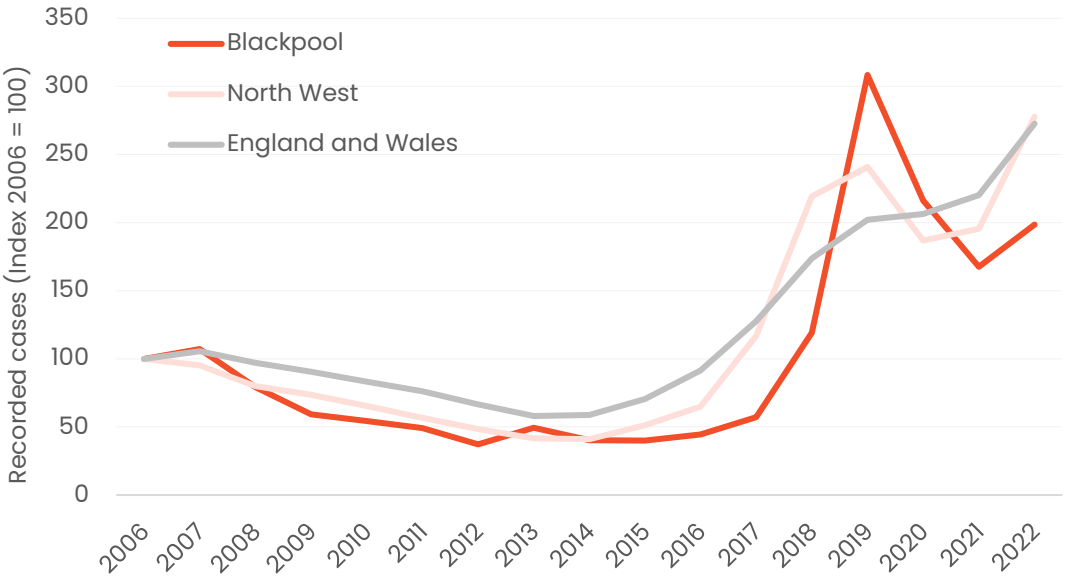


Figure 22: Public order offences in Blackpool, compared to regional and national averages, 2006-22

Source: Home Office police recorded crime by Community Safety Partnership, Onward analysis



**Notes: a) The above data is by Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which equate in the majority of instances to local authorities. The North West totals in this figure are that of CSPs, which is different to total crime records as it does not account for British Transport Police data, areas not covered by CSPs, and crime in unassigned areas.*
b) The data from 2019-21 for the North West and England and Wales are likely to be under-counted because of a technical reporting issue in Greater Manchester.

Police data alone will give only a partial picture of antisocial behaviour. Some Community Safety Partnerships and Police and Crime Commissioners will hold more detailed data on antisocial behaviour including reports to local authorities, housing associations or public transport providers. Local leaders should compliment the nationally available data with these local sources where they can. The recommendations section below includes more information on how to use data to effectively map and target low-level crime.

2. Bringing life back to high streets and town centres

Consistent data on the vibrancy of high streets is not widely available at a local level. One measure that serves as a good proxy is vacancy rates. Data used in Figure 23 measures the vacancy rates for retail and leisure units (excluding industrial and office units) by local authority, region and country. These units are typically located on high streets in local areas and so serve as a good indicator to study high street vacancy. A second measure is the number of businesses that are locally owned, which gives a clue as to the number of independents on the high street. Figure 24 shows the count of businesses operating a single site, based on VAT/PAYE data at the local authority, regional, and national level.

Figure 23: Vacancy rates for retail and leisure units, 202

Source: Whythawk commercial location data, 2021

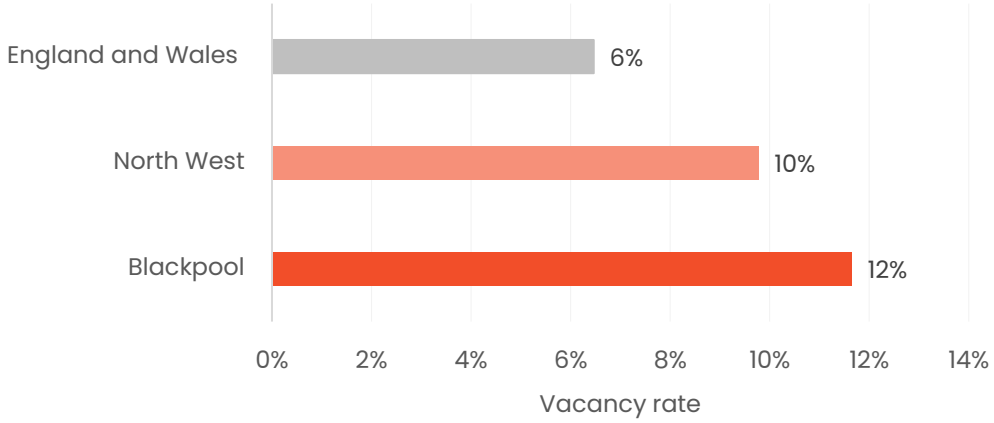
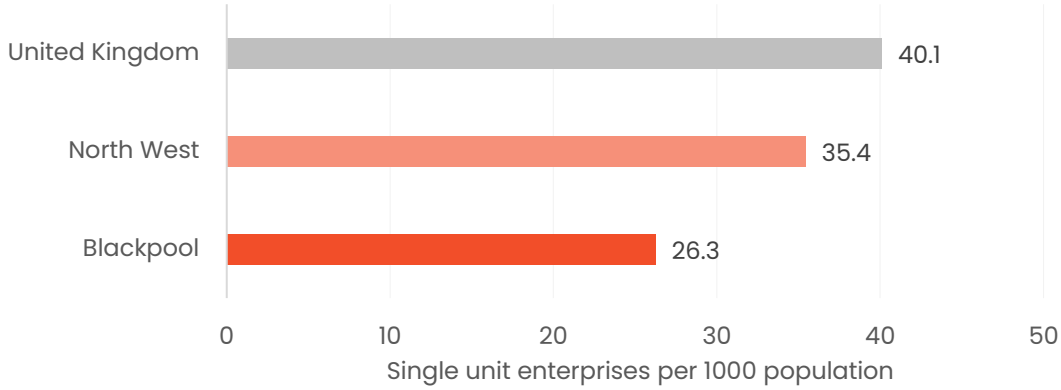


Figure 24: Number of independent businesses per 1,000 population, 2020

Source: ONS data on single unit enterprises, 2020



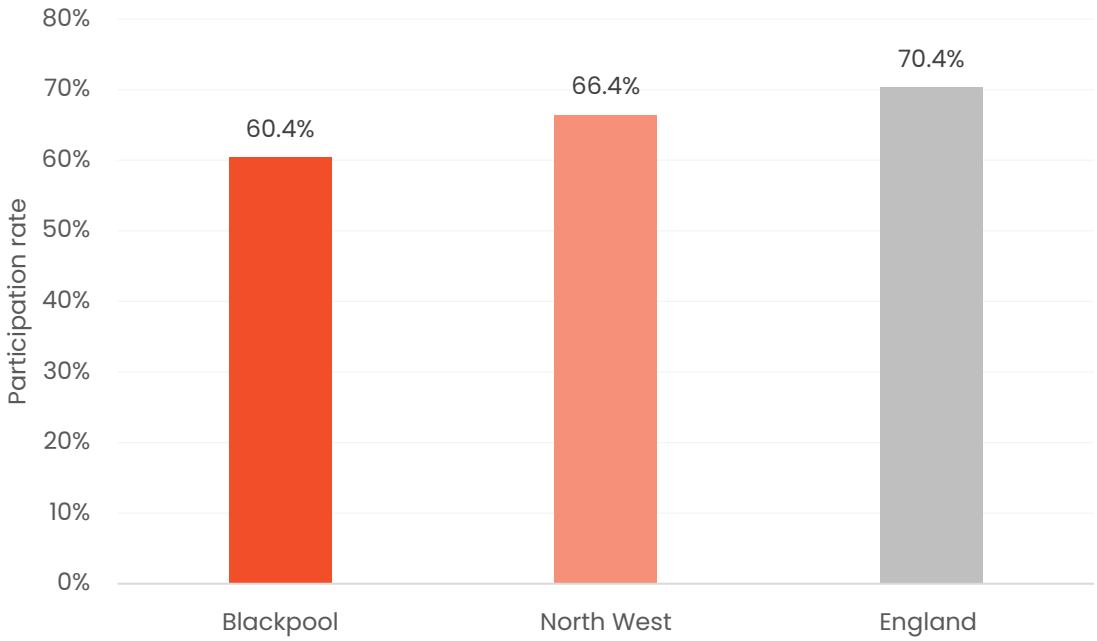
Local authorities or Business Improvement Districts may collect data on footfall in town centres using mobile phone or credit card data. This information, particularly where mapped, can be invaluable in understanding the degree to which town centres are serving as hubs of activity. Given it is not collected consistently across the UK, we have not included it here.

3. Supporting local sport, culture, heritage and green space

Issues that inform pride in place, like sport, culture, and heritage, are often difficult to quantify. But some data is available that can shed light on whether these issues are an area's binding constraint to levelling up. The first is Arts Council England data from the Active Lives Survey on cultural participation. Figure 25 looks at the share of the local population that has participated in an arts or culture activity at least once from 2015 - 2017. The second is data on the availability of green space, taken from the Ordnance Survey, that measures the proximity to parks, playing fields, and gardens, shown in Figure 26.

Figure 25: Share of population that have participated in arts or cultural activities, 2017

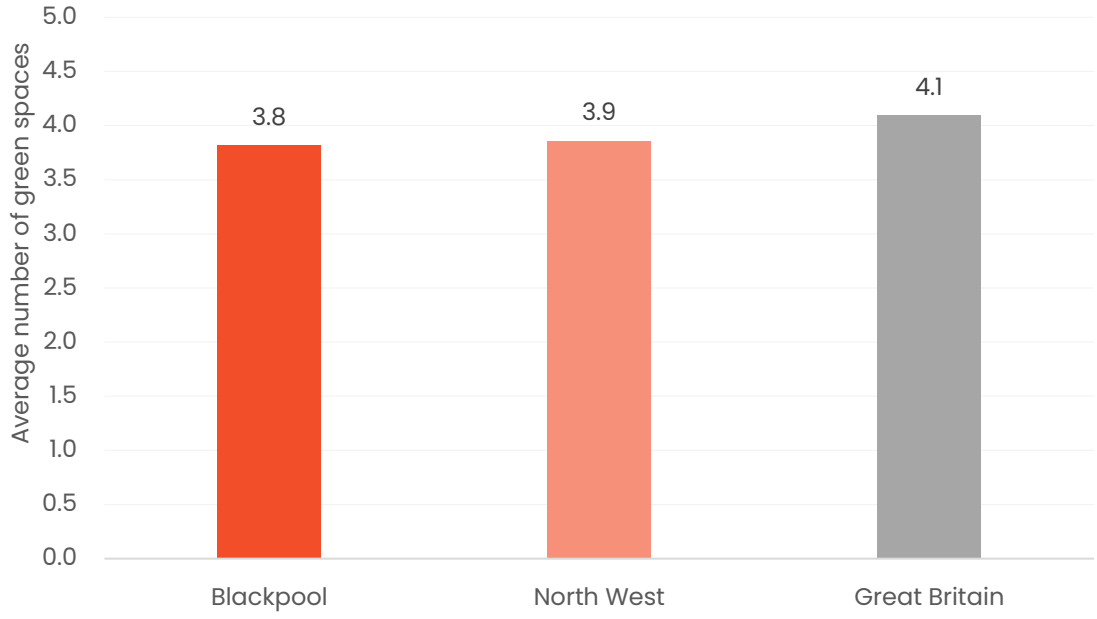
Source: Arts Council England, Active Lives Survey 2015-17



**Note: The data for all English authorities measure the share of population that have participated in an arts or cultural activity at least once between 2015-2017, the duration of the Active Lives Survey.*

Figure 26: Average number of green spaces within a 1km radius

Source: ONS Analysis of the Ordnance Survey data, April 2020



**Note: A green space here refers to any public park, garden or playing field.*

4. Boosting local growth in the private sector

A wide range of economic data is available at the local authority level. Three types of evidence can be particularly useful in understanding a local area's economic strengths and weaknesses:

- **Industry mix** - The ONS Business Register and Employment Survey data reveals the employment levels in different sectors, changes over time, and differences with regional and UK averages. This can help reveal trends, like a decline in manufacturing or growth in professional services, and also issues with the stock of existing employers, like an over-reliance on public sector employment.
- **Physical connectivity** – Office for National Statistics geospatial data shows areas people can travel to by public transport in different windows of time up to 60 minutes. Data compiled by Onward for our report *Network Effects* reveals how many additional jobs are accessible within 60 minutes using public transport.
- **Skills** - ONS data reveals the qualification levels within an area, pointing to whether a focus on human capital is necessary to boost local growth. Ofsted data can also reveal the quality of schools in a local area based on their performance at recent inspections.

Figure 27: Industry composition in Blackpool, compared to regional and national averages, 2021
Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey

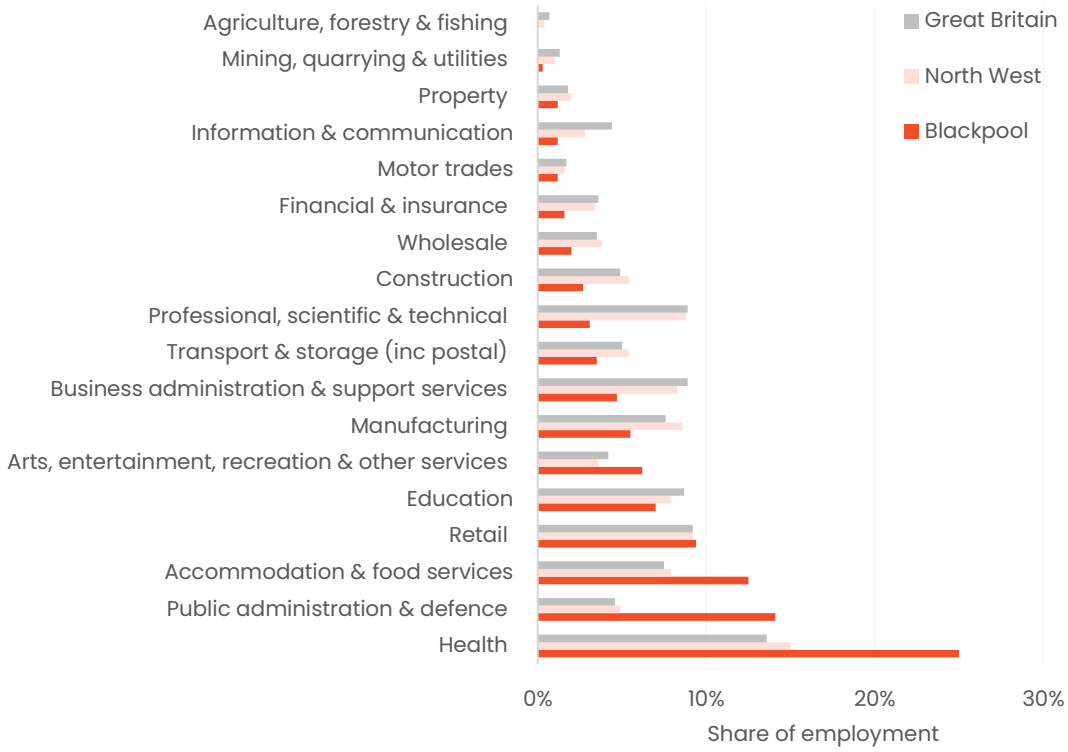


Figure 28: Change in industry composition over time

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2015-21

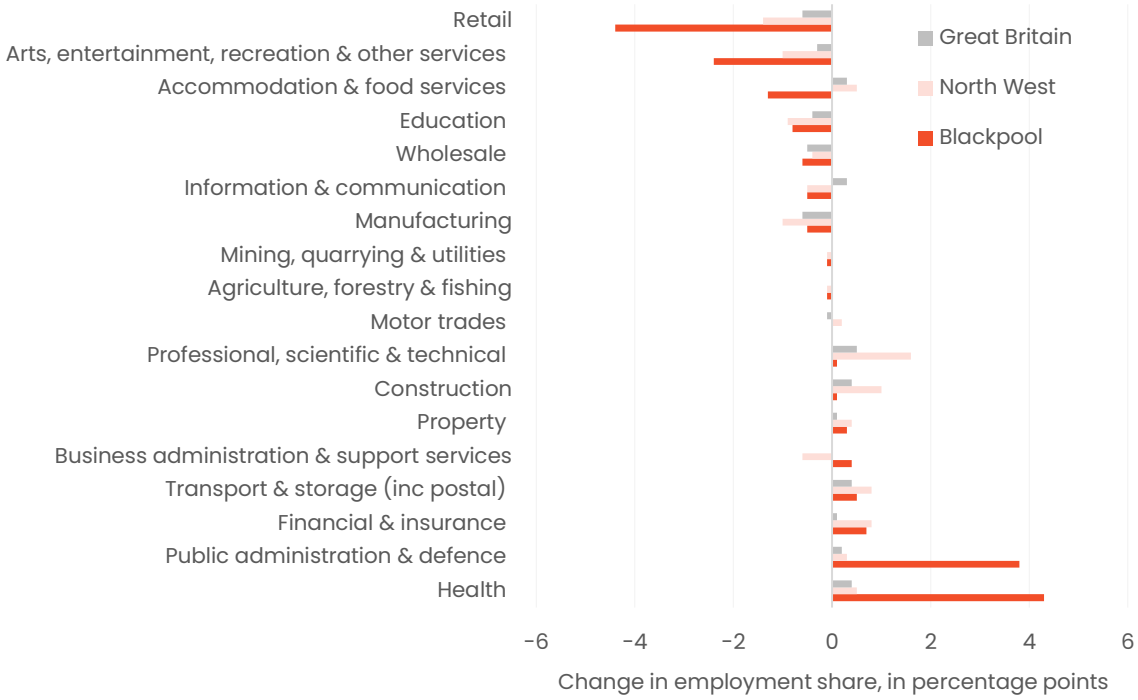
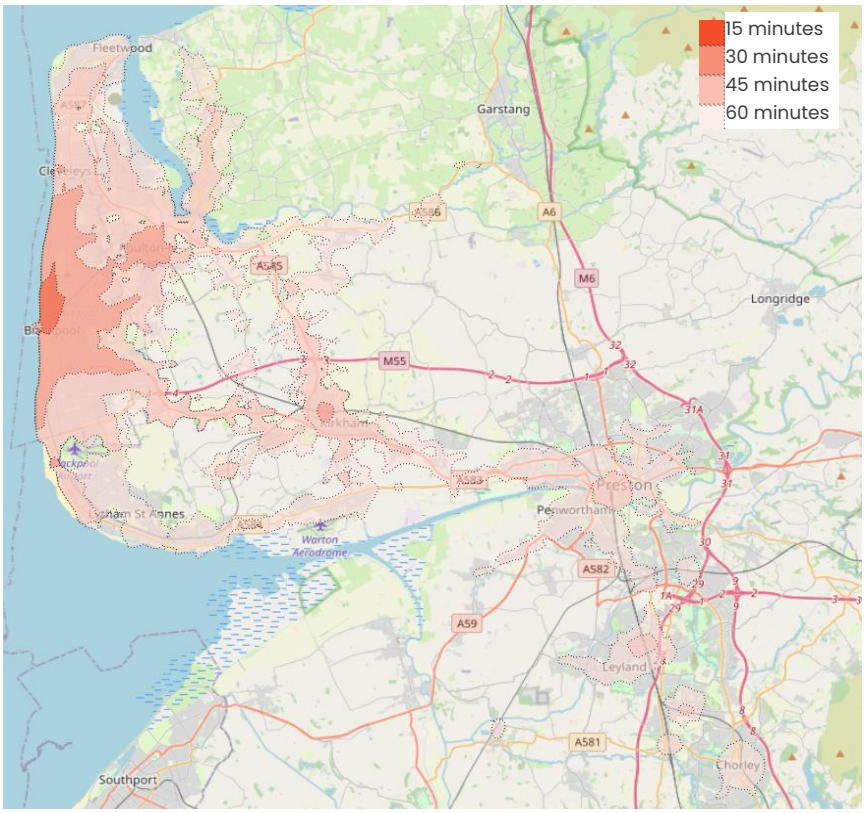


Figure 29: Areas reachable within 15, 30, 45 and 60 minutes on public transport, 2022

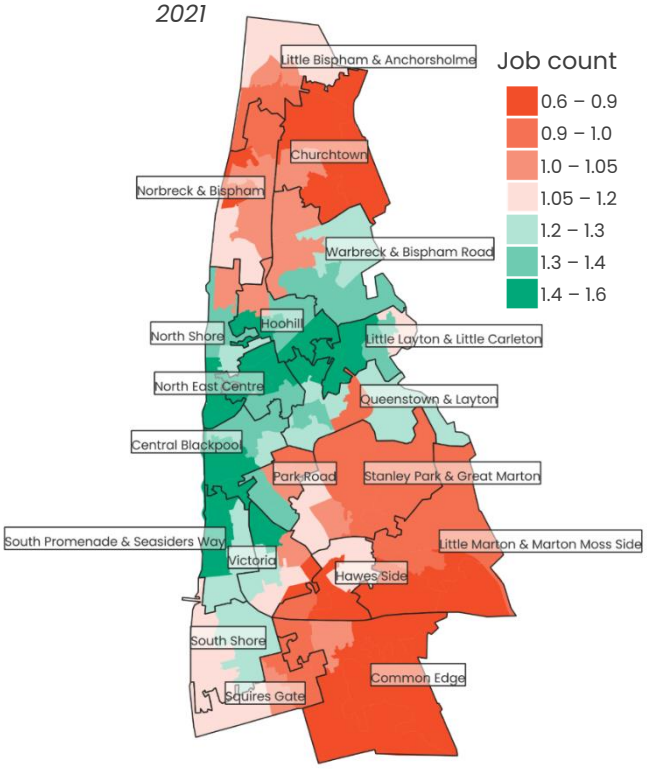
Source: DLUHC Geospatial Travel Isochrones, Onward analysis



**Note: Figure 29 was produced using data for a centrally located Output Area in Blackpool*

Figure 30: Jobs reachable within 60 mins on public transport for each job within a 5 mile radius

Source: Onward report 'Network Effects,' 2021



Great Britain average: 1.88

Figure 31: Share of pupils in underperforming primary and secondary schools

Source: Ofsted inspection outcomes, 2022

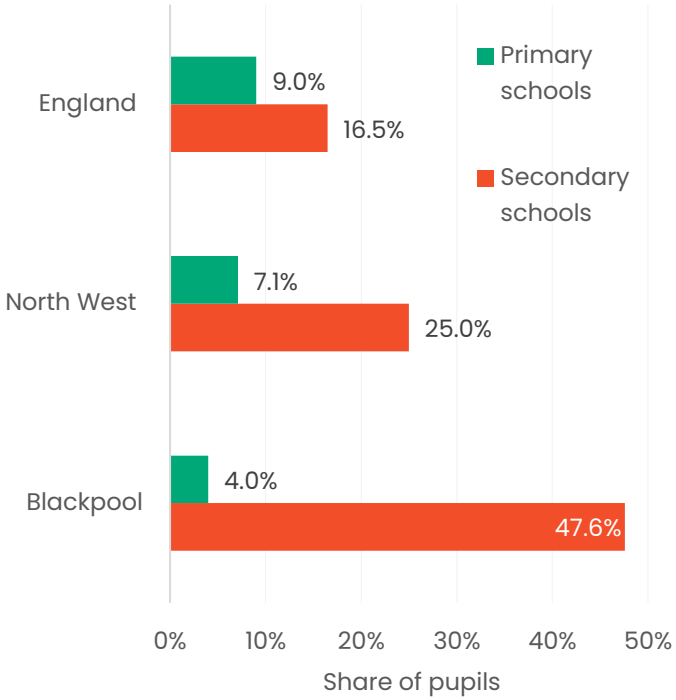
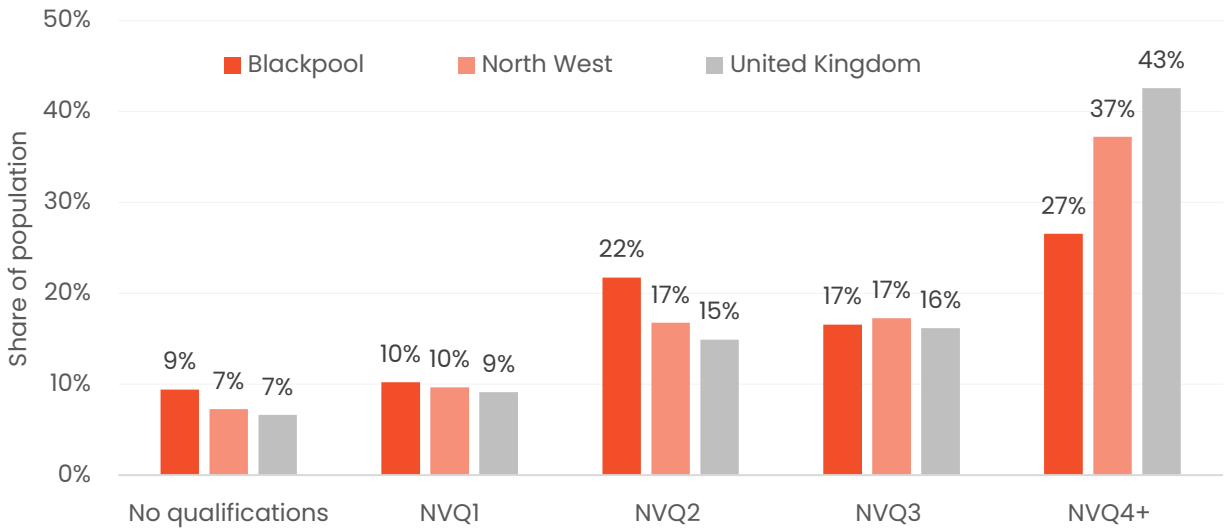


Figure 32: Share of population by highest level of qualification, 2021

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, December 2021



5. Providing community-based support to the most disadvantaged

There are a wide range of indicators and tools that can help to understand the level of social need in a local area. The most commonly used is the Index of Multiple Deprivation, used in the maps above to identify levels of hyper-local need.

A useful proxy in understanding whether disadvantage is a barrier to levelling up is economic inactivity, and the drivers behind it. This data is collected by ONS regularly and reported at a local level. This data should be looked at alongside a population pyramid for an area, to ensure that an unusual age profile is not behind gaps with national averages.

Figure 33: Economic inactivity by reason, as a share of population aged 16-64

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, 2021

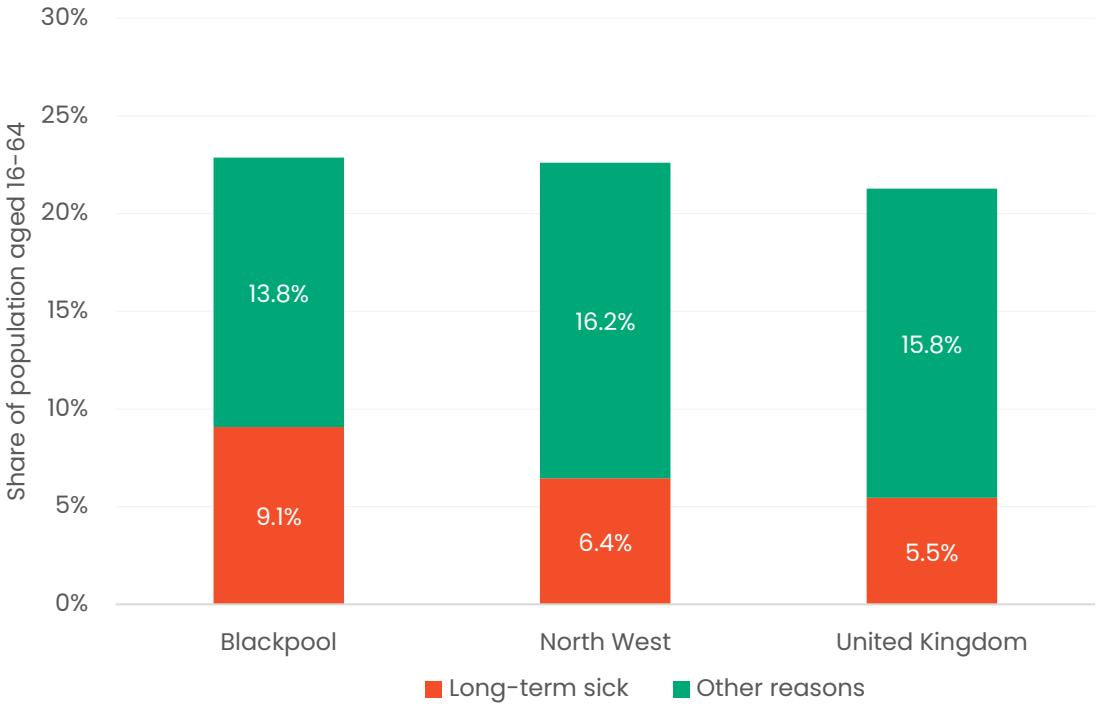
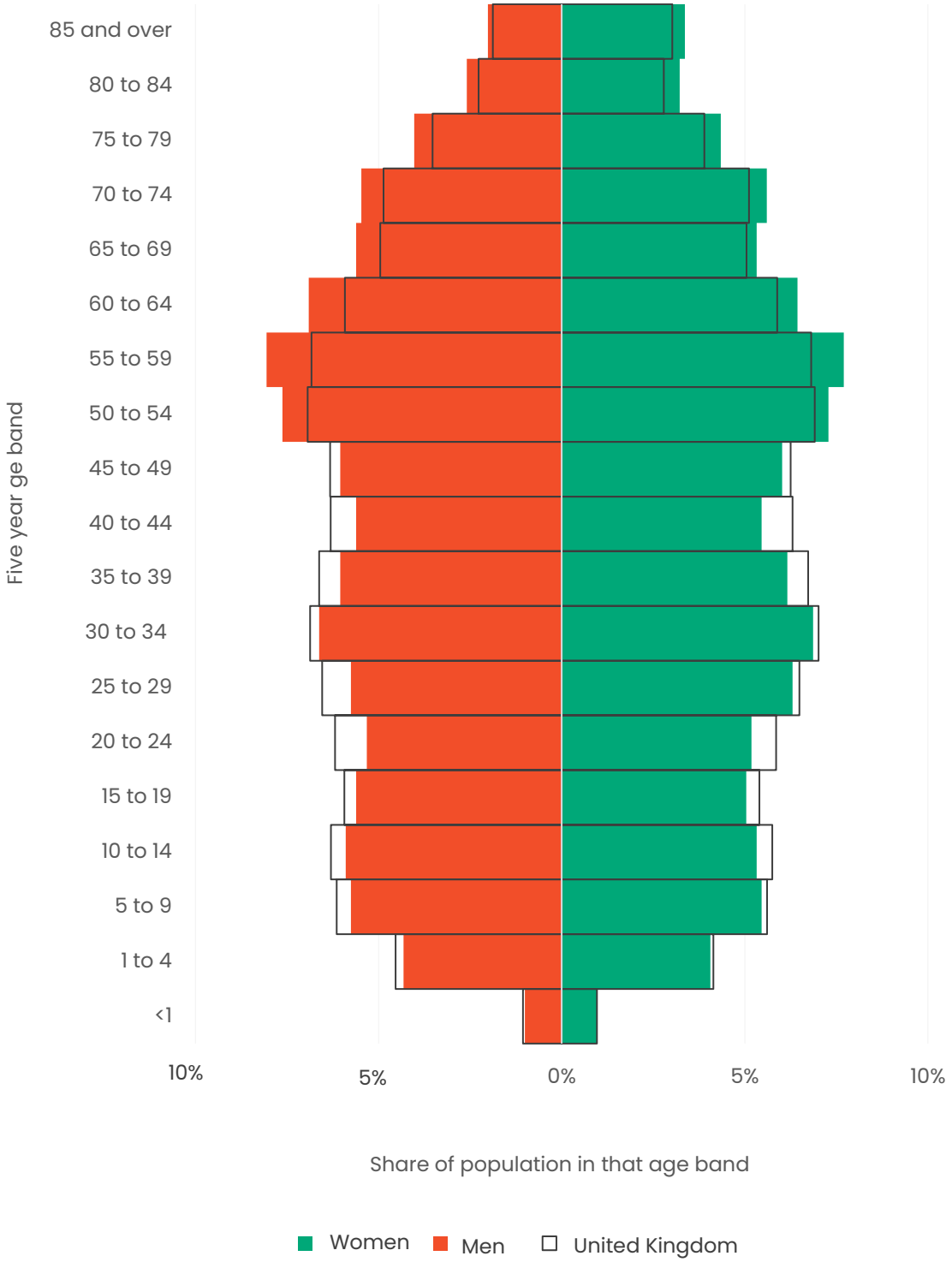


Figure 34: Population pyramid for Blackpool, by 5 year age-band and gender
Source: ONS Annual Population Projections, 2021, Onward analysis



Taking action

Playbook of interventions

Leaders in communities are not only best placed to identify local challenges, they are also best placed to begin tackling them. Many councillors, business owners, and civic leaders will have limited resources and multiple calls on their time. Local authorities have struggled with reduced funding since 2010 which has limited their ability to deliver benefits for their residents beyond statutory services - a challenge discussed in other Onward research.[5] But this places an even greater premium on focussing on interventions that are evidence-based, and steps that leverage support from communities and businesses so councils don't need to go it alone.

The recommendations below are designed for local leaders. They can be implemented with the powers and resources already available to them, and have been tried and tested in other areas either in the UK or abroad. While these interventions do not rely on Westminster, Ministers can still play a positive role. National Government departments should support these efforts where they can, at times by stepping in with investment or new powers and at other times by stepping out of the way.

1. Tackling antisocial behaviour, particularly among young people

1.1 Local leaders can collectively identify antisocial behaviour hot spots and focus their resources on solving underlying problems in those areas

Around 5% of neighbourhoods in the UK are responsible for over 50% of crimes.[6] Hot spots policing identifies where these high-crime clusters are and focuses resources on them. This place-based approach contrasts with the person-based approach that has historically been more common in policing. A hot spots approach is particularly relevant for neighbourhood policing that focuses on antisocial behaviour, which our research visits have shown often occurs in public areas like town centres, tram stops or parks.

There are two broad types of hot spots policing.[7] The first saturates an area with a greater police presence, increasing the regularity of patrols or the number of officers. The second is "problem oriented policing" which seeks to understand and tackle the underlying causes that turn neighbourhoods into high-crime clusters.

The evidence for hot spots policing is strong. The Youth Endowment Fund finds that hot spots policing reduces overall offending by 17%, with an even higher rate for disorder offences (20%) and drug offences (30%).[8] A separate international systematic review of 65 studies containing 78 tests of hot spots policing found that it "generates statistically significant small reductions in overall crime and disorder" and didn't create displacement effects, where crime simply moves to a different area.[9]

The review actually found diffusion effects: reductions in crime in the areas surrounding the hot spots. The US National Research Council concluded that "studies that focused police resources on crime hot spots provided the strongest collective evidence of police effectiveness that is now available." [10]

Pilots have taken place in the UK in recent years that have shown the potential benefits of hot spots policing:

- **Southend-On-Sea:** 2.6% of the geographical area of Southend-On-Sea in Essex is home to 41% of crime. [11]A Randomised Control Trial in 2020 concentrated one-a-day, 15 minute foot patrols in these 20 "harm spots". Street-visible offences were reduced by 30% as part of the trial, with researchers concluding that "the use of two-officer foot patrol can be highly effective at preventing serious violence in street-visible settings in small areas in which such violence is heavily concentrated."[12] Detective Chief Inspector Lewis Basford of Essex Police designed the intervention as part of a Masters degree in criminology from Cambridge University, studying under the founder of evidence-based policing Professor Lawrence Sherman.[13]
- **Birmingham:** A hot spots policing effort in the Perry Barr area of Birmingham trialled 5 and 15 minute patrols in areas with high levels of reported antisocial behaviour and street crime. Across both types of intervention antisocial behaviour reduced by 14%, with a stronger positive effect for less frequent but longer patrols compared to more frequent shorter ones.[14]
- **Bedfordshire:** A 2020 study tracked daily official crime reports in a sample of 21 high-crime neighbourhoods in Bedfordshire. A randomly assigned sample of the hotspots received 15 minute foot patrols, some on multiple days. The study found that these patrols reduced crime by 40%, with no displacement effect. The study also found a "cumulative effect" of additional prevention when patrols took place on subsequent days, peaking at three days.[15]

It is widely acknowledged within policing that the hot spots approach works, particularly problem solving policing. A College of Policing study found that 88% of officers agreed that problem solving is "an important part of policing in general" and 86% agreed it is "relevant to almost every area of policing".[16] But just under half of survey respondents reported having been involved in a project which they considered to be problem-solving in the past 12 months. So why isn't this approach scaling?

Effective delivery is the primary barrier to the roll out of hot spots policing. A College of Policing study found "recurrent challenges both in the implementation and practice of a problem-oriented approach".[17] 43% of officers surveyed by the college said they did not have access to information necessary to perform effective problem-

solving. Of the 20 forces surveyed by the college, only 14 had produced guidance, of which only one referenced how to implement an organisation-wide problem solving approach.[18]

Lack of analytical capacity is a particular challenge in implementation, given the need to accurately identify hot spots and measure the impact of interventions in real time. This is where local leaders can play a role. Representatives from local government, health, policing, and other agencies can work together through Community Safety Partnerships to better identify hot spots and target resources to solve problems leading to antisocial behaviour. Prioritisation by leadership within police forces and by Police and Crime Commissioners can also increase the chances of effective implementation.

Hot spots policing to tackle antisocial behaviour can be enhanced by combining it with other place-based interventions:

- **Alcohol-free zones:** The introduction of a Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) can reduce antisocial behaviour in places where it is linked to public drinking. Our research in Barry found that the designation of the Barry Island tourist area as an alcohol-free zone reduced the number of day trippers that came to the area under the influence of alcohol and increased the number of visiting families. There is limited research on the broader effectiveness of DPPOs, but their success relies on them being integrated with broader approaches to community policing.
- **Physical realm improvements:** In certain hot spots, changes to the physical environment can reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour - sometimes called a 'situational prevention strategy'. A study in Lowell, Massachusetts, found that steps like razing abandoned buildings or clearing up graffiti lowered crime by increasing the risk of committing an offence and reducing the attractiveness of potential target areas.[19]
- **Community engagement:** Effective problem solving in crime hot spots often means building connections with members of the community or residents in and around the neighbourhood. This was a core element of interventions to reduce antisocial behaviour as part of New Labour's "New Deal for Communities" (NDC) programme. Evidence from the Blakenhall NDC partnership in Walsall found that the introduction of community-focused Neighbourhood Wardens in 2002 reduced the number of residents who felt unsafe alone after dark from 39% to 25% (compared to a national average of 13%).[20]
- **Social sector capacity:** A large proportion of antisocial behaviour is driven by a small number of individuals who have multiple and complex needs. They might be rough sleeping, addicted to drugs or alcohol, or suffering from severe mental health problems. A core component of problem-solving

policing will therefore be ensuring there are services in the community to provide wrap-around support for these individuals when they are referred by the police or adult social workers.

- **Data collection and analysis:** Effective targeting of resources can be hampered if the available data doesn't provide a clear and detailed account of antisocial behaviour. Police and Crime Commissioners can work with Community Safety Partnerships to bring together police reports and calls for service in integrated dashboards, with consistent categorisations of different forms of antisocial behaviour. Thames Valley Together, launched by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit, is a pioneering initiative to bring together different forms of data to better understand and respond to rising levels of crime, while also upholding data ethics.[21]

Community leaders can help to hold public officials to account by spreading awareness of the Community Trigger and supporting its use. The Community Trigger can be initiated by any member of the public who has reported three or more instances of antisocial behaviour within a six month period, and instigates a local authority led, multi-agency case review.[22] These processes can prompt action on problems with a particular resonance to the public, and require agencies to investigate in more detail why issues are emerging. Yet awareness of this right within communities is low - only 6% of the public are aware of the Community Trigger and just 2% say they fully understand it.[23]

The Government has already taken steps to support police forces introducing hot spots policing. In 2021, the Home Office provided 18 police forces with an additional £4 million to increase hot spots policing focused on violent crime, inspired by the pilot in Southend.[24]

But the primary efforts to scale hot spots policing and solve place-based problems will need to come locally. Leaders from across the public, private, and community sectors should work to identify antisocial behaviour hotspots, focus their resources, understand underlying problems, and solve them to prevent future offending.

1.2 Local leaders can improve safety on buses, trams and trains, as well as public transport stops and stations

Antisocial behaviour on and around public transport has impacts wider than crime. Residents who feel unsafe on the bus, tram, or train are less likely to commute or visit town centres. Housing near unsafe transport stops won't benefit from any uplift in value, and businesses away from town centres won't attract customers. These harms are particularly acute for women and girls: one study estimated that up to

3.7% of GDP can be lost through women's fears of travelling through reduced access to employment and deterred tourism and leisure journeys.[25] So making public transport safer needs to be a core priority for local leaders.

Hot spots policing has a role to play in making public transport safe. In London, a number of pilots have sought to reduce offending on the public transport network. A trial on the London Underground network saw a pair of officers assigned to patrol 57 of the 115 highest crime underground stations for 15 minutes, four times a day.[26] Reported crime dropped by 28% on the patrolled platforms, with most of the reduction occurring when police weren't present - what Professor Larry Sherman of the University of Cambridge calls a "phantom effect".[27] Another study on the bus network saw a 37% reduction in incidents reported by bus drivers through hot spots policing.[28] However, a small displacement effect was generated in the area surrounding the bus stop due to officers arriving and departing on the bus, which increased predictability for potential offenders.

"Eyes on the street" are often the most effective deterrent for antisocial behaviour in highly public places like on public transport. A report by Transport for the West Midlands on violence against women and girls highlighted the positive example of "Street Angels", where volunteers patrol public transport at night and offer an additional pair of eyes as well as increased support.[29] A systematic review of "eye cues" - photographs or stylized images of eyes - found that they reduce antisocial behaviour by 35% when they are present, compared to only 16% for CCTV.[30] Whether the eyes are real or artificial, reinforcing prosocial behaviour to deter low-level offending is a promising strategy for local leaders to explore.

Improvements to the environment on and around public transport also reduces antisocial behaviour. A Home Office Review found that improved street lighting leads to significant reductions in crime, with an overall effect of approximately 20%.[31] It found that recorded impacts were because "lighting increases community pride and confidence and strengthens informal social control... rather than increased surveillance or deterrent effects".

This emphasis on prosocial environments was echoed in a National Audit Office effectiveness review on antisocial behaviour. It argued that "the cues set out for behaviour by those in a position to do so - owners of pubs, police, councils in control of litter collection, etc - are all significant contributors to determining whether or not criminal activity will occur."[32] Strengthening an area's social fabric is ultimately one of the strongest protections against antisocial behaviour.

1.3 Local leaders can support programmes that divert young people away from antisocial behaviour, including sport, after school clubs, and mentoring

Residents that participated in our focus groups were clear that they saw young people as particularly responsible for antisocial behaviour in their area. There is good evidence that young adults present a particular challenge when it comes to crime: 18 - 25 year olds make up less than 1 in 10 of the UK population but almost a third of all police cases.[33]

But participants in our focus group were also clear that they did not necessarily blame young people. They argued that there was little to occupy their time productively and few economic opportunities for them to take advantage of. Members of the public wanted a strong and clear police presence so that they felt safe, but didn't favour an overly punitive approach to low-level offending. Again, there is good evidence to support the instincts of the public: a "what works" review by the US think tank RAND for the NAO found little evidence to support coercive sanctions like Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) as an effective form of deterrent.

So alongside hot spots policing and safer travel interventions to tackle offending when it occurs, local leaders should prioritise evidence-based interventions to divert young people away from antisocial behaviour in the first place.

The 2010 report of the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour makes an important distinction between two types of youth offender: "children and young people who commit crime", who they describe as "*adolescent limited*", and "a smaller group of prolific, serious, and violent offenders whose behaviour is often seriously antisocial from an early age", who they describe as "*life-course persistent*".[34]

Much of the literature on which interventions are effective in reducing youth offending are focused on the more serious life-course persistent young offenders. Evidence-based interventions to divert these young people away from crime include child skills training, behavioural parent training (BPT), multisystemic therapy (MST), family functional therapy (FFT) and Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC).[35] These interventions are led primarily by local authorities, police forces, and Violence Reduction Units in different parts of the UK, and are focused on the most at-risk young people who have often experienced significant trauma.

Alongside these efforts to tackle serious youth offending and violence, local leaders in areas in need of levelling up should play a central role in preventing low-level offending and antisocial behaviour among young people for three reasons:

1. Low-level antisocial behaviour can be *a route for young people to more serious forms of crime*. Research indicates that hanging around on street corners is predictive of offending behaviour among young people.[36] Engaging young people in diversionary activities early can reduce costs and harms further down the line.

2. Widespread antisocial behaviour can *damage an area's social fabric*, causing more serious offending in the long term. If residents are scared to spend time in public places and the public realm deteriorates, then over time environments become more hospitable to crime. If the sense of mutual trust and shared obligation that is characteristic of a healthy community breaks down, then young people are less likely to develop the prosocial behaviours that reduce their risk of offending.
3. Interventions to divert young people who are only engaged in low-level offences are *often relatively inexpensive and have spillover benefits*. Mentoring programmes build relationships that can help build skills and secure employment. After school clubs can improve educational attainment and work readiness. Engaging in sport can improve physical and mental health. These interventions do not draw significant funding away from trauma-informed programmes that support the most serious youth offenders.

The research on effective diversionary activities for young people points to three types of evidence-based community programmes: sport, after school clubs, and mentoring.

Sport

Engaging in sport can be a highly effective way to reduce young people's engagement in antisocial behaviour. Our research in Oldham introduced us to the work of social entrepreneur Moinul Islam MBE who has been involved in supporting local clubs offering boxing, football, and the South Asian sport Kabbadi. In communities like Oldham these activities, offered around the school day and at low cost, can be a productive way for young people to engage socially and improve their health.

Academic research indicates that participation in sport can reduce antisocial behaviour. The Youth Endowment Fund cites a review of 61 studies that finds "a large impact on offending" of up to 52%, but caveats this by highlighting heterogeneity in the results and limited strength of evidence in studies that make up the causal impact.[37] The review also finds that single sex interventions, and those with majority ethnic minority populations, have large effects. The College of Policing has found strong evidence of the effectiveness of broader sport-based interventions, like wilderness adventures.[38]

Evaluations of sports-based interventions in the New Deal for Communities programme found that they were most successful when they were part of a programme that improved cognitive and social skills, reduced impulsiveness, raised self-confidence, and supported education and employability.[39] So local leaders should ensure that sports clubs are paired with opportunities for coaching and mentoring, or involve young people taking on leadership roles and responsibilities.

As recent research by Onward found, there are significant regional gaps in access to sport.[40] Around 60% of young people in the South East and South West participate in sport outside of school, compared to around 40% in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber. So local leaders in areas most in need of levelling up may face more of a challenge in increasing participation. But local community groups and sports clubs are better placed than the national government to get young people involved, and will see more of the benefit in reduced antisocial behaviour.

After school clubs

Some young people may engage in sport after school. But well-structured after school clubs that offer safe, supervised environments and structured programming can be much broader than physical activity. Two systematic evidence reviews find that after school clubs reduce minor crimes by approximately 8% for those young people who participate.[41] The reviews both point to the greater impact of after school clubs that offer more than recreational activities, particularly opportunities for academic or skills-based activities.

Beyond formal programming, one of the most important roles of after school clubs can be to provide a space for young people to spend time with each other that is not a park or street corner. An evaluation of one after school programme in Camden found that an offsite location was a particular advantage for children and parents that were distrustful of public agencies.[42] There is a key role for local leaders to play in identifying potential sites for after school clubs, and matching them with community and educational organisations that could provide activities. Government can also play a role in the capital investment for these centres, including through the Youth Investment Fund.[43]

Mentoring

Mentoring programmes involve matching young people with adults to help them develop their skills and confidence. Multiple systematic evidence reviews have confirmed the effectiveness of mentoring in reducing youth offending and antisocial behaviour. The Youth Endowment Fund estimates that mentoring reduces offending by 14.2%, and is particularly effective for young men.[44] An evidence review on diversionary activities by the Barrow Cadbury Trust finds "good evidence that mentoring can reduce reoffending and result in positive behaviours amongst people under 21".[45] Mentoring programmes can be high cost, meaning they are most appropriate when targeted at young people who have already engaged in low-level crime or antisocial behaviour.

There is a wide variety in the effectiveness of mentoring programmes, which often comes down to design and delivery. A review of 40 process evaluations conducted by the Youth Endowment Fund found a number of success criteria for effective

implementation of mentoring including mentor recruitment and training, developing a strong mentoring relationship, parental engagement, and a well-managed termination of the relationship.[46]

While a range of national mentoring programmes exist, local leaders are well positioned to develop local schemes and work with schools, local government, and the police to target their support to young people engaging in antisocial behaviour.

One variant on mentoring for which there is emerging evidence is detached youth work.[47] This intervention sees youth workers meet young people out in the community - often in parks, sports cages, street corners, or around the school gates. Youth workers engage with young people on any worries or concerns, and can refer them to activities or forms of support. A pilot launched in Erdington, Birmingham, sees detached youth workers spend time with young people on their route to and from school in order to de-escalate any potential violence and promote positive behaviour.[48]

2. Bringing life back to high streets and town centres

2.1 Councils can issue letters notifying all landlords of long-term vacant properties of their intention to trigger a High Street Rental Auction

Vacant properties on high streets and in town centres are the most obvious marker of decline. Focus groups in Walsall told us that "once you get three, four, five shops shut then the whole place starts to go downhill." In South Tyneside we heard that vacant shops on Kings Street were "depressing" and "awful compared to how it used to be." So a clear priority for local leaders should be reducing the number of empty shops, restaurants, and other units in their area.

High streets everywhere have been hit by the rise of online shopping and the impact of the pandemic. But this shouldn't lead to persistently high vacancy rates. If demand decreases for units, rental prices should drop until more potential tenants come forward. Or property owners should take advantage of new planning flexibilities and convert their units into high-quality housing.

Yet this is not happening. High levels of vacancy are driven by some landlords choosing to leave their properties unoccupied for long periods of time rather than reduce rental prices towards a fair market rate. Big institutional investors are particularly to blame. Four ownership categories - investment management schemes, financial institutions, overseas investors, and real estate companies - account for more than half of UK high street stock.[49] Units owned by these organisations have significantly higher vacancy rates, between 7 and 10 times greater

than private individuals.[50] To date, councils have had few mechanisms to encourage or require these large institutional investors to rent out their properties.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, due to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2023, gives councils a new lever: High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs). This is a powerful new tool under which local authorities can require landlords of high street units empty for more than 12 months to hold a public rent auction, where prospective tenants offer bids for the maximum level of rent they are prepared to pay on a fixed term lease. The landlord would be legally required to let the unit to one of the bids at the end of the auction process for a fixed period of 2-5 years. If a landlord refuses to initiate a rent auction, or does not respond to the notice, the local authority would have the power to hold an auction and lease the property in absentia, holding any rental revenue in escrow if necessary.

It will take local authorities time to build teams that can instigate and support HSRAs. But they can immediately put landlords of vacant properties on notice. At almost no cost, councils can write to landlords of vacant units informing them of their intention to trigger a HSRA. This would nudge landlords towards lowering their rents and bringing their properties back into use. And it would help reduce the number of actual HSRAs that the local authority would need to trigger once it had established its processes. Identifying these landlords can be a consistent challenge, so local authorities should consider pooling their resources (possibly across a Combined Authority area) to support teams of legal and property experts that can undertake this work

Some smaller private landlords may genuinely want to bring their properties into use but are struggling with capital investment. In these instances, councils might choose to provide support. In Kent, the County Council chose to distribute loans to property freeholders as part of its "No Use Empty" campaign which significantly reduced vacancy rates in commercial properties.[51] Local authorities could use their HSRA warning letters to direct landlords to these types of programmes and other support schemes being offered to promote regeneration.

2.2 Councils can tackle eyesores and derelict buildings through Section 215 notices

Dilapidated and run-down buildings in town centres contribute to the feeling that a place is left behind. Common issues in areas we researched included crumbling brickwork, broken guttering, smashed windows, fallen fences, and debris around properties like dumped furniture, builders' rubble, and abandoned vehicles. Eyesores can discourage people from living in town centres, undermining the transition to mixed use which will be key to reducing the reliance on retail. And fundamentally,

they make an area less beautiful. If members of the public don't enjoy walking around an area or take pleasure in its streets, it is less likely to succeed.[52]
Local authorities can require property owners to address these issues through Section 215 notices. Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) provides a local authority with the power to require land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity of an area. The notice sets out what action needs to be taken and the period of time that it needs to be addressed in. Property owners have some time to resolve the issue informally before the notice comes into effect.

The Government issued guidance on Section 215 notices in 2005 to encourage their broader use by local authorities.[53] Research underpinning the guidance found that 20% of notices approved in 1998/99 were not eventually served, suggesting that the threat of a notice was sufficient to encourage action.[54] The research also suggests that Section 215 notices are effective in securing compliance: 80% of notices served resulted in compliance and only 6% were appealed.[55]

Section 215 notices have been used by councils across the country. In 2018 Greenwich Borough Council issued a notice to a property on Plumstead High Street, requiring the owner to repair boarded up windows, address a pigeon infestation and clear up bird droppings.[56] In 2015 Brighton and Hove Council issued 54 notices to commercial and residential properties to improve the look of their waterfront area, with only 16 needing to be formally triggered.[57] In 2000 Hastings Borough Council launched "Grotbusters", an initiative to aggressively and proactively use Section 215 notices to turnaround the appearance of their town. By 2017, they had secured remediation of over 830 buildings and now provide advice and guidance to other local authorities on using Section 215.[58]

Local authorities also have powers under Sections 77 & 78 of the Buildings Act 1984 to take action where buildings are unsafe, including where walls or roofs appear unstable. And where buildings are listed to recognise their special historic or architectural status, councils are able to issue Repair Notices to require owners to take steps to improve their physical condition.

The 2021 "No Place Left Behind" commission argued that "local authority capacity and culture may be significant barriers to greater use" of Repair Notices and Section 215.[59] Some elected councillors have reported that officials have been reluctant to use Section 215 for fear of protracted legal disputes, or do not have the resources to identify, produce, and issue notices.[60] There are also limitations in what Section 215 notices can achieve, given that local authorities are not easily able to take ownership of the property if problems aren't addressed.

But Section 215 notices, when targeted at particular areas with emotional resonance to the public, are a useful tactic in improving the physical fabric of town centres. While they require upfront investment, they can generate revenue downstream by reducing vacancy rates and increasing business rate revenue. They should be used more readily.

2.3 Local leaders can increase their collective capacity to improve the public realm through the formation of parish and town councils, Business Improvement Districts and Community Improvement Districts

Local assets and public spaces require ongoing management, regular investment, and ultimately a great deal of attention. It can be difficult to maintain this level of care for a local place from a distance. That's why empowering leaders at the community level is so important, including through institutions like parish and town councils. Councillors at this level are better positioned to look after civic assets, deliver services to clean up high streets, and secure investment and support from local people.[61]

In Cornwall, much of the public realm was recently transferred to management by parishes and towns, and research has found "considerable improvements in the quality of service provision" as hyper-local councils are "able to pay closer attention to the buildings and facilities on their patch, and invest in their maintenance and improvement."[62]

There are similar examples of success across the country:

- Battle Town Council in East Sussex developed a plan to repair and improve the local Grade II listed Almonry building.[63]
- Flitwick Town Council in Bedfordshire created a five-year Town Strategy, including actions to enhance the local village hall and market.[64]
- Churchill and Langford Parish Council in Avon employs a parish orderly to empty bins, keep footpaths clear, remove fly posting and clean bus shelters.[65]
- Sutton Parish Council in Cambridgeshire took on responsibility to deliver youth services in order to reduce antisocial behaviour and has successfully tackled vandalism and petty crime.[66]

Yet not enough of the country is covered by parish and town councils. In nearly two thirds of England (63%) the lowest level of governance is either a district or unitary council.[67] There are no town and parish councils whatsoever in over 80 district or unitary council areas in England, including many of the UK's largest municipalities such as Plymouth, Blackpool, Stockport, Liverpool and Leicester.[68] This is partly

driven by the multiple barriers to forming a parish and a town council, including a resident petition and Community Governance Review.

Local leaders can expedite the process to form a parish or town council. Councils could hold an automatic ballot across the whole local authority area to identify particular neighbourhoods with a desire to take on greater powers. They could also support the process of parishing by proactively engaging with communities around high streets or town centres that would benefit from greater care and attention and helping them to organise. And leaders from the community and third sector can organise residents to pull together numbers for petitions. Outside of these more formal processes, local leaders can experiment with new forms of local governance - the Levelling Up White Paper's commitment to "community covenants" provides a potential route to channel funds, powers, and assets to more local bodies with flexible governance.

It is not just the public sector and communities that can benefit from greater collective organisation. The private sector can self-organise to invest in the public realm through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Under a BID, businesses in a specific geographic area contribute a small levy to a central body that provides collective services like security, public realm upkeep, and business support like networking. There are now 330 BIDs across the UK, collectively investing £146 million and representing around 124,000 businesses.[69] In some areas larger BIDs have taken on significant civil engineering projects, such as the Colmore BID in central Birmingham which has redesigned several streets and public squares in partnership with the local authority.[70] Some areas are also experimenting with the creation of Community Improvement Districts, which give third sector organisations the chance to shape high street and town centre development alongside businesses through a BID-style organisation.[71]

Some local leaders told us that a BID wasn't appropriate for their area, and that businesses would not support a ballot. But a vocal minority of firms often don't represent the broader business community. Even in the challenging commercial context post-pandemic, 86 ballots to form a BID in the UK resulted in 82 successful outcomes and four failures.[72] To overcome hesitancy, councils can offer to subside BIDs for the first year of their formation, or guarantee to match investment for particular schemes to improve the public realm.

2.4 Councils can enable the transfer of assets to community ownership

High streets and town centres are most successful when they are hubs for community. One of the most effective ways of engaging community members in the regeneration and maintenance of town centres is to give them control and responsibility over assets.

Community-owned assets have multiple benefits. First, transferring assets to community groups can build a stronger sense of pride in place by ensuring that residents are invested in the future of their area. Second, it can secure the future of assets that may be lacking financial investment by harnessing civic capacity and making the most out of resources in the community. Third, it can unlock innovative uses for vacant or poorly run high street stores by shifting control from local authority officers or institutional landlords to smaller and more creative civic groups. And finally, it can reduce the financial burden on local authorities by turning under-performing assets that might be seen as a liability into sites that generate sustainable sources of revenue for third sector organisations that might otherwise be reliant on public sector grant funding.

There are excellent examples of community-owned high street and town centre assets across the country, many of them supported by the charity Power to Change:

- **Bootle, Merseyside:** the community organisation SAFE Regeneration purchased The Lock and Quay pub and turned it into a community centre offering business support and incubation alongside arts programmes[73]
- **Levenshume, Manchester:** a dilapidated Victoria train station was turned into Station South, a destination cycle café, bar, urban garden and active travel hub. Funding initially came from a crowdfunder and charitable grants, but the revenue raised from the cafe and venue now makes it self-sustaining.[74]
- **Sidcup, London:** The New Generation Community Trust successfully acquired Blackfen Library from Bexley Council in 2015, refurbishing it and turning it into a community centre with a cafe and children's play area. Profits from the cafe, book sales, and events support the community library and over 80,000 people visit each year.[75]
- **Trawden, Lancashire:** A village of 2,000 people acquired their local pub, the Trawden Arms, along with the village shop, library, and community centre. The pub was listed as an Asset of Community Value by the council, which ensured residents could raise the funds for the site before it was acquired by developers.[76]

The Local Government Association and Locality, the national membership network for community organisations, have prepared guidance on how to support communities to take on local assets.[77] There are two primary mechanisms that they outline.

The first is transferring council assets to community groups. This means land or buildings from a statutory body being transferred to a community organisation at less than full market value in order to achieve a public benefit. It is underpinned by Treasury guidance which recognises the broader societal value of assets. Councils

that have successfully adopted this approach have often developed a Community Asset Transfer strategy as part of their approach to asset management, and introduced a designated officer as a first point of contact for asset transfer enquiries to coordinate activity across council departments. [78]

The second is supporting the Community Right to Bid. The 2011 Localism Act gives communities the right to attempt purchase of Assets of Community Value when they go on the market before developers can acquire them. To ensure that the community has this right, councils need to ensure that they have an up to date, publicly available list of Assets of Community Value. Councils can also proactively issue guidance to the community to ensure they are aware of this right and make them familiar with council processes and legal duties.

Councils can take a range of steps to help community groups take on assets via either of these routes. They could offer financial support through grants or loans, including things like matching funds for crowdfunding campaigns or low-interest loans for asset purchase and repair. They could help facilitate transfer of ownership through steps like negotiating the terms of the transfer and providing support during the transition period. Councils could engage the community in the process of identifying and prioritising assets for community ownership by hosting public meetings, setting up an online forum, or forming a task force to gather input. Councils could also provide technical assistance in areas like grant writing, financial planning, and legal advice.

In 2021 the Government launched the Community Ownership Fund, which provides capital grants for community organisations looking to acquire assets.[79] As of December 2022, just under £17 million had been provided for around 70 projects.[80] Local leaders should seek to maximise the amount of Community Ownership Fund investment in their areas by identifying and supporting applications.

2.5 Local leaders can create thriving town markets

Town markets can be vital in restoring civic pride. They boost local economies, creating outlets for local independent retailers and allowing consumers to spend their money closer to home. They strengthen an area's social fabric, providing public spaces for communities to come together in a collective activity. And they can underpin an area's identity. Residents in Oldham told us that Tommyfield market, home to the country's first chip shop, was once the pride of the town centre. Focus group participants said it meant that "Oldham used to be the place to come to" and that the area was "the hub of the North West… the market used to be buzzing".

Vibrant town markets have been key to several regeneration efforts. Altrincham in Trafford had a vacancy rate of around 30% in their town centre in 2010.[81] The local

council invested £1 million in the refurbishment of their Grade 2-listed market house and transformed it into a gastronomic food hub. The market now draws over 7,000 people a week and in 2015 won Observer Food Monthly's award for best market.[82] In Bury, community members took over the management of Radcliffe Market in 2018 when there were only five stalls in the dilapidated building. Now over 1,300 people visit over 30 stalls every week, and the market employs 18 staff on the Real Living Wage as well as engaging a network of 25 volunteers.[83] The Teenage Market, launched by the Government's High Streets Task Force, focusses on giving young people an opportunity to commercialise creative talents and now has 50 locations in the UK including Corby, Sunderland and Horncastle.[84]

Local leaders can take a range of steps to support the creation of town markets. Most obviously, local business leaders and entrepreneurs can invest in the creation of indoor or outdoor town markets in their local areas. Councils can make it easier for investors to find appropriate sites, including asset transfer of historic market halls, loosening permitting regulations in town squares or on streets, or the use of public land to host stalls. Councils can also provide business support programmes to help entrepreneurs set up their stalls, possibly offering business planning advice and grants or loans to allow them to set up.

Town markets won't be right for every area - and there are certainly places in the UK where projects involving market halls have turned out to be poor investments, given low footfall or a lack of upfront community engagement in design. But in most places, local leaders can take steps to drive footfall to town markets by coordinating their activities at particular times of week and in particular places. For example, organisations running sports, arts, and cultural activities could relocate their programming on market day. Town markets are ultimately successful when they are at the core of an area's social fabric - as Tommyfield once was in Oldham.

3. Supporting local sport, culture, heritage and green space

3.1 Local leaders can create Heritage Development Trusts and councils can designate Heritage Action Zones to protect and improve access to heritage assets

Heritage is an underappreciated foundation of levelling up. Research from Public First found that it was the third biggest contributor to pride in place, behind only local parks and local people and significantly ahead of factors like local businesses or football clubs.[85] 92% of respondents to a Historic England survey about historic environment-led regeneration projects felt that it raised pride in their area.[86] The UK is an international outlier in how much the public values heritage: cultural heritage participation rates are 25 percentage points higher than the EU average (65% vs

40%).[87] Our research visits found evidence for this on the ground, in the support for Walsall's Leather Museum, South Shields' Town Hall, and Clacton's Pier.

Heritage contributes to pride in place by creating and reinforcing a shared sense of identity and belonging. It's about both the historic buildings in towns and cities as well as the stories that residents tell each other about the past and the present. Research by the University of Newcastle has found that in places with larger numbers of heritage assets people have a stronger sense of place.[88] And heritage isn't just about the distant past - it can be about industrial history too. 91% of respondents to a YouGov survey supported the reuse of mills for cultural, residential, commercial, retail or manufacturing purposes.[89] When heritage assets fall into a state of disrepair, it has a particular emotional resonance and reduces pride in place. So local leaders need to prioritise repairing and maintaining these sites.

The most promising action local leaders can take to protect heritage sites is to create a Heritage Development Trust. These are organisations responsible for the maintenance and management of heritage properties in a particular area. Given their focused mission, they are more successful than local authorities or other bodies in managing heritage sites and ensuring that they are accessible by the public, as well as generating revenue to pay for ongoing investment.

A number of successful Heritage Development Trusts are already in operation across the UK, including:

- **Historic Coventry Trust:** Founded in 2011 with a focus on conserving The Charterhouse, a 14th Century Monastery, but now responsible for 22 buildings: the largest transfer in Europe of public heritage assets to a charity. Their aim is to "become the guardian of the city's heritage in perpetuity." [90]
- **Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust:** Founded in 1979 and has been purchasing properties since 2013 using low-cost loans from Great Yarmouth Borough Council which were contingent on business plans detailing how revenue would be generated. The Trust has delivered 17 successful projects generating £8.4 million for the local economy, removing eight sites from the buildings at risk register and recruiting 644 volunteers. [91]
- **Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust:** Originally set up by Sunderland Council but has been independent since 1986. Commissioned by the local authority to complete the restoration of three high street buildings which had fallen into a state of disrepair. Secured charitable funding to repair and turn the buildings into a record shop, grocers, café and arts venue. [92]

Local leaders should take steps to create and grow these Heritage Development Trusts. Councils should offer them low-cost loans as up-front capital, and transfer assets to them for management. Trusts can access a range of philanthropic funds to support their activities. Chief among these funders is Historic England, who operate

a wide range of grant schemes, but others include the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund.[93]

Heritage Action Zones (HAZs) are a mechanism introduced by Historic England and DCMS to focus heritage activity and investment. HAZs are typically established in areas with a high concentration of heritage assets, such as historic buildings, structures, or landscapes, that are at risk of decline or in need of repair. The first wave of zones was completed in 2021/22, and more are currently in development.[94] Local leaders wanting to kickstart progress on regenerating heritage assets could combine the formation of a Trust with the designation of a HAZ.

3.2 Local leaders can ensure the sustainability of local sports clubs

Sport came through in our research as one of the strongest sources of pride in place. Where clubs were struggling, like Oldham Athletic FC, this had an emotional and cultural resonance beyond any individual scoreline. Local leaders looking to promote pride in their areas need to pay attention to the fate of these teams.

Many professional clubs are struggling financially. Data from 2020 reveals that six English Football League clubs (around 8%) were in acute financial difficulties and seven County Cricket clubs were loss-making.[95] Last year two Rugby Union teams went into administration: Worcester (founded 1871) and Wasps (1866).[96] Many of the reforms needed to protect these clubs need to be delivered at the national level, including steps like the implementation of the Fan-Led Review of Football. But local leaders have a key role to play in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of these clubs.

Councils have a particular role to support club premises, which are often their largest financial asset. Local authorities should expedite planning and licensing decisions affecting clubs and, where possible, provide business rate reliefs and broader financial support. They should ensure that all stadiums are listed as Assets of Community Value, so that if they are put up for sale the community has a protected window to make a bid. And they should work with leaders of schools, colleges, and universities to facilitate partnerships that maximise the use of costly floodlit training facilities and pitches.

Community leaders can step in when clubs are in trouble. The Bury FC Supporters Society were successful in securing £1 million from the Government's Community Ownership Fund to buy the team's stadium, Gigg Lane. They plan to convert it into a community hub that hosts a gym, adult education centre, public meeting area, and physiotherapy services to tackle long-term illness in the local area.[97]

Non-league teams can also play a role in building local identity: polling expert James Frayne has highlighted Long Eaton FC as an example of a "bright spot" in a town hit hard by deindustrialisation.[98] Local leaders should target resources at these clubs that may have a lower profile but greater reach in the community. They could even be considered as part of a social prescribing programmes, to support people with physical and mental health challenges.

3.3 Local leaders can create diaspora networks as a way to boost pride of place and increase philanthropic investment

Support for culture, sport, and the arts will often come from philanthropic sources. This means local leaders will regularly need to bid into national funding pots to secure investment. Some bids will be successful, but many will not.

Diaspora networks offer a route to more sustainable funding and in-kind support. These networks look to connect diaspora from a particular town or city in the UK, and leverage their emotional connection to their hometown to secure support. They can also increase the pride of existing residents by highlighting successful "sons and daughters" of an area that have gone on to international success.

One of the most established diaspora networks is Made in Stoke-on-Trent.[99] The network was started by Staffordshire University, backed by organisations including the local council, football club, community trust, and counts leading figures from the private sector and philanthropists as members. Tech entrepreneur Matthew Bowcock, a network member, argues that "there are successful people originally from Stoke but now doing incredibly exciting things all over the world, and we're on a mission to persuade them to bring more of that positive activity back to their home city."[100] The network has launched programmes to support care leavers and regenerate Stoke city centre. There are a range of other place-based philanthropists supporting local activity including Jonathan Ruffer in Bishop Auckland, Andrew Law in Sheffield, and John Nickson in Blackpool.[101]

Local leaders can proactively engage these philanthropists by creating institutions like community foundations to channel their investments. They could also develop philanthropic propositions relating to culture or the built environment to become a focus for a diaspora network - possibly through a "Friends of" or "Supporters of" network. By leading with a message of pride and connection to a local area, leaders stand the best chance of creating a sustainable and successful forum for change.

3.4 Councils can support programmes to animate the public realm through culture and art

Culture and art can be a powerful tool to boost pride in place and create a sense of local identity.[102] Research commissioned by Arts Council England found a strong relationship between the number of cultural assets in an area and the level of community satisfaction, as well as polling evidence that arts and culture are as important as schools when considering whether to move to or remain in an area.[103] Research by The National Lottery Community Fund finds that "projects offering arts and heritage activities are more likely than others to result in an increased sense of community pride and belonging." [104]And a study of 99 US neighbourhoods designated as "cultural districts" found that in these areas growth in property values was 9.3% higher, income growth 5.4% higher, and poverty 2.3% lower.[105]

But accessibility is key. The word "culture" can prompt images of ticketed one-off events in closed-off theatres. These events will be a part of any area's cultural offering, but local leaders have an opportunity to support arts that are visible and accessible to everyone in public places. 62% of UK adults agree that cultural experiences on the high street give them a sense of pride about their local area, according to polling commissioned by Arts Council England.[106]

Across the country, there are excellent examples of local leaders introducing art projects that animate the public realm:

- **Walsall:** A small statue of "Hoppy" the Hippo has been a meeting point in Walsall town centre since it was installed in 1972 - often for people to meet at, and then go somewhere outside the town.[107] Social Enterprise Urban Hax and Walsall Council developed the "Hidden Hippo" trail to encourage young people to explore their area. They created an augmented reality tour around key sites, with digital content triggered by scanning physical hippos dotted across the town.[108] Young people shared pictures of themselves completing the tour, helping them celebrate the area's craft heritage and discover local history.
- **Barnsley:** Two phone boxes in Barnsley town centre had become dilapidated, attracting anti-social behaviour including graffiti and drug dealing. Barnsley Council purchased them for £1 as part of BT's telephone box adoption scheme and transformed them into "Tellapoem" boxes containing a new work by former poet laureate Simon Armitage along with graphic design from a local artist.[109]
- **Coventry:** In Autumn 2020 the pandemic meant that footfall was low in Coventry city centre, and during October half term many parents were looking for activities for their children. The local council created the "Monster Trail" with large inflatable monsters installed around public buildings in the city centre, coming out of windows and on top of roofs.[110] Families walked the trail, trying to spot the monsters and sharing pictures. The project significantly boosted footfall and has been repeated in

subsequent years, and an FOI request revealed it cost the council only £40,000.[111]

Councils and private landlords can also engage with creative communities on temporary or "meanwhile" use of vacant storefronts, on terms that ensure they can get it back if a commercial tenancy becomes available. In Plymouth, a group of artists and charities took on meanwhile use of six buildings within the city centre and created galleries, event spaces, and studios.[112] In Bath, the council used grant funding to support 12 installations by local artists in the shop windows of vacant commercial units, boosting footfall and generating social media buzz for a public investment of only £12,000.[113] To support this activity, councils should market opportunities for meanwhile management of buildings for up to 3 years, retain repair and maintenance obligations where they act as the asset owner, only call for an Outline Business Case from prospective occupiers instead of significant detail, and offer business rate relief where possible.

3.5 Local leaders can create "pocket parks" in urban areas

Local parks and green spaces are one of the biggest sources of civic pride. In a poll by Public First, 36% of people said that local parks and green spaces make them proud of their area - higher than any other response.[114] This affinity for green spaces was also reflected in our focus groups, with residents pointing to areas like Walsall's Arboretum and South Tyneside's waterfront.

Land availability and affordability in dense, urban areas limits the prospect of large parks and green spaces. Given that almost 84% of the UK population live in urban areas, local leaders need to be creative.[115] Pocket parks are a green, cost-effective, and community-oriented option. They are small-scale green spaces created on land with limited alternative development value like vacant building plots, parking areas and alleyways, which are often initiated and run by community groups.

Pocket parks can deliver health benefits. One study found reports of anxiety and depression for those living within 400 metres of urban green space were 7% lower than for those living more than 800 metres away.[116] . Another study found that pocket parks in low-income neighbourhoods boost physical activity by between 38-50%.[117] They also generate considerable health cost savings - approximately £2.1 billion could be saved if everyone in England had good access to green spaces.[118] Pocket parks can even drive drown crime. A large-scale study across 301 US cities found that even a 1% increase in green space provision was associated with a decreased crime risk of almost 40%, particularly burglaries and violent crime.[119]

Community-led pocket parks can reduce costs of maintenance by attracting volunteers - but that means making sure processes to create parks are simple and

accessible for members of the public.[120] Local leaders could create customised training programmes for community groups and provide assistance on funding pots available, eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, partnership opportunities, and timelines. Fields in Trust have resources that can help local leaders and community groups navigate the planning system to deliver more and better green spaces.[121] They also provide hyperlocal data on green space provision, explicitly identifying neighbourhoods that fall below the basic minimum standard. Local leaders could use this metric to identify how their neighbourhoods rank and work towards the specified minimum standard.[122] Nesta's "Rethinking Parks" initiative also offers lessons on using technology to support park management.[123]

Good examples of pocket park approaches from the UK and around the world include:

- **Hackney:** Brenda Puech, Chair of the Living Streets Group in Hackney campaigned to have underutilised kerbside parking units converted into temporary mini gardens called "pop-up parklets" given the lack of access to private gardens in most residential units in Hackney. This has now been officially adopted by Hackney Council who have provided guidance and support on establishing parklets. This has also sparked a national effort to create more parklets in neighbourhoods with less car ownership.[124]
- **Salford:** The voluntary group Incredible Edible, in partnership with Age UK Salford, run edible community gardens in three vacant plots in Swinton. They offer free and fresh produce to all in the community, and serve as a communal space for the elderly to socialise and keep active. Incredible Edible run more than 100 similar edible gardens all over the country, including in Calderdale, Wigan, and Wakefield. [125]
- **Philadelphia, USA**: The Philadelphia Horticultural Society started the Land Care initiative in 2004 to "clean and green" vacant and discarded plots. They have redeveloped over 800 properties alongside 18 community groups using local volunteer labour. Residents living near renovated plots saw a 40% decrease in depression and a 29% decrease in gun violence.[126]

4. Boosting local growth in the private sector

4.1 Local leaders can develop hyper-local industrial strategies

Across the areas we researched, private sector growth was lacking. In particular, there was a deficit of *tradeable* private sector companies that sold products or services outside of an area, either domestically or internationally, to bring in investment. Instead, struggling areas relied on the public sector and parts of the *non-tradeable* private sector that primarily cater to local residents like hospitality,

retail, and social care. This ultimately means money is recycled within an area leading to lower productivity, fewer jobs, and economic stagnation.

Building an industrial base is not easy. Successful private sector clusters grow over decades and rely on complex networks of skilled workers, strong institutions, and sound infrastructure. The levers to conduct this sort of industrial strategy often sit nationally not locally. And not every area can be home to a private sector cluster - some thriving towns will instead become places to live and raise a family, with many residents combining working from home with commuting to a nearby town or city. But even if the path to local private sector growth is challenging, more local leaders should make efforts to pursue it.

The first step is identifying comparative advantages. Areas are unlikely to succeed in growing across a wide range of industries, so instead they should focus on specific areas of opportunity where businesses could genuinely compete internationally. Developing a hyper-local industrial strategy can be a tool to guide this process of self-discovery and develop an action plan. Scale is key. Regional industrial planning covers functional economic areas that host populations in the millions, but hyper-local industrial planning should focus on the specific contributions of towns and cities with populations likely under a million. The eventual product could be described in a number of ways - an economic or industrial review, commission, plan or vision - but the aim of the activity remains the same. As Dolly Parton says: "find out who you are and do it on purpose".

The city of Milwaukee in the US Midwest provides a good example. Historically, Milwaukee used its proximity to fresh water in Lake Michigan to become the "Beer Capital of the World" in the late 1800s and develop a large tanning industry.[127] Deindustrialisation over the 20th Century hit the area hard, and local leaders needed a route to boost private sector growth. The natural route would have been to focus on existing sectors like food and drink or textiles. Instead, business leaders commissioned research which revealed specific capabilities in water technologies: instruments like valves and sensors as well as services like purification and pumping. Local leaders developed a coordinated plan to grow water technology firms, connecting them to universities and creating the Global Water Center. By 2018, the water cluster comprised 175 firms with $10.5 billion in revenues and employed over 20,000 people.[128]

In the UK, Oldham offers a good example of hyper-local industrial strategy. Local leaders launched the Oldham Economic Review in September 2021 to provide analysis and recommendations on the future for the area.[129] The review was led by figures from local government, business, universities, and further education, and held 18 evidence sessions with external experts. Their final report argued that "the economic transformation of Oldham must start by breaking the dependence which it has on the foundational economy" and argued for a greater focus on manufacturing,

logistics, and innovation activities in the area. It also proposed new governance for the area's economy, to bring together fragmented business support programmes and make better links between employers and educational organisations.[130]
Once local leaders have identified their economic strengths then they need to develop the interventions and programmes that will build on them. The remainder of the recommendations under local growth in the private sector focus on these steps.

4.2 Local leaders can provide targeted business support and advice to tradeable firms with high growth potential

Market dynamics should ensure that firms adopt the most innovative practices and identify opportunities to sell to more customers. Competition means that those who don't go out of business, and those who do grow. But a range of market failures mean that businesses don't always have access to the right information, struggle to coordinate with other firms, or can't identify potential customers. Addressing these market failures is where local leaders can play a role.

One successful approach to providing business advice and support is "economic gardening". It was pioneered in Littleton, Colorado in the 1990s where officials working in economic development committed to growing local firms instead of trying to attract big multinationals - "gardening" instead of "hunting".[131] Officials focused on stage 2 companies (10-99 employees) and provided them with a range of tools to understand market opportunities, develop business plans, and identify gaps in their network. In two decades, the employment base in Littleton doubled from 15,000 to 30,000 and the sales tax base grew from $6 million to $20 million.[132] Crucially, "economic gardening" was not a typical business support programme: it employed a highly skilled small team with private sector experience employing sophisticated analytics and building strong local relationships.

The broader evidence for business support programmes is mixed. In an evidence review by the What Works Centre for Economic Growth, 14 out of 23 business advice programme evaluations found a positive impact on at least one business outcome.[133] They found that "a strong relationship and a high level of trust between advisor and client" was important for these programmes to be effective, and that they had a higher impact on sales and turnover than on employment.[134] National programmes have also had mixed success. The Government's "Help to Grow Digital" programme was discontinued in December 2022 after low take-up by businesses.[135] Other programmes have shown more promise. The North West pilot of the Made Smarter programme focussing on the adoption of technology in manufacturing created over 1,000 jobs and around £200m in GVA in its first three years.[136] Made Smarter is delivered by Combined Authorities, in contrast to the Treasury-led Help to Grow scheme, and has now been expanded to other parts of the country.

Local leaders looking to launch these schemes, including councils and chambers of commerce, should carefully review the evidence. The What Works Centre has a range of toolkits on business advice, ranging from business mentoring programmes to investment promotion.[137] A core insight across the evidence is that "light touch" interventions like a new website or portal are unlikely to work - schemes need to actively engage with firms to support them. Given this degree of engagement brings higher costs, local leaders should precisely target the firms they have identified as having growth potential.

4.3 Local leaders can create new partnerships between businesses, schools, colleges, and universities to boost employment

Businesses across the country struggle to recruit skilled workers. In areas most in need of levelling up, this problem is particularly acute. Local leaders have some formal levers available to them to upskill their workforce: combined authorities have responsibility for the adult education budget and local authorities will operate a range of employment support programmes. But given the complexity of the skills system, local leaders can also play an informal role in convening and corralling actors to address skills gaps.

Soft power in the skills system can be exercised by a range of different actors. Local authorities, chambers of commerce, business representative organisations and others can step up and take responsibility for joining the dots. Hyper-local industrial strategies can identify the areas for focus, which could be a particular sector or technological capability. Local leaders are then able to build skills pipelines towards those opportunities through a combination of on- and off- the job training, qualifications like T-Levels and apprenticeships, and rapid training programmes like bootcamps and Sector Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs). Employers are central to these partnerships, providing insight to inform training programmes and offering employment opportunities to incentivise people to participate in them.

There are good examples across the country of local leaders using soft power and informal leadership to bring together partnerships and create new institutions:

- **Newcastle:** Lockheed Martin and Northumbria University developed a partnership in 2022 focused on space and solar physics, as part of the defence company's expansion of its space manufacturing and satellite activities in the North East.[138] Local leaders also held a "Space Skills and Suppliers Summit" to facilitate conversations between Lockheed Martin and skills providers like local colleges and private training companies.
- **Rotherham:** The University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) operates a Training Centre which pairs apprentices with over 460 partner companies including Boeing, Rolls Royce, and Airbus.[139] The Centre also operates upskilling and retraining programmes which they

develop with industry. Their advisory board includes representatives from manufacturing firms across South Yorkshire who share insight on skills gaps in their firms and sectors.

- **Birmingham:** The business-led West Midlands screen industry body "Create Central" partnered with the BBC to develop their Apprentice Hub which supports "flexi-apprenticeships" across small businesses in the creative industries who struggle to offer full apprenticeships.[140] Participating firms including Full Fat TV and Optomen Television, part of the funding is provided by the West Midlands Combined Authority, and training is supported by further education bodies including Solihull Sixth Form College.[141]

4.4 Local leaders can increase the supply of employment land by creating Mayoral and Locally-Led Development Corporations

Private sector clusters can be held back by a lack of suitable office, lab, or factory space. In some instances, the type of site required can be very specific: advanced manufacturing firms may need a large land area for factories or proximity to a port, while professional services firms may need proximity to other knowledge-intensive businesses and access to high quality amenities to attract high-skilled workers. This sort of development can require significant investment. And depending on the scheme, private investment may need to be unlocked through public sector subsidy or new infrastructure. But even without investment, there are actions local leaders can take to kickstart the development process.

Mayoral and Locally-Led Development Corporations are public-private partnerships with a statutory footing that take on responsibility for the development of a specific geographical area. Their typical functions involve spatial planning, attracting investment, managing assets, and delivering redevelopment. But their key value is in creating effective governance - they bring together a range of local leaders from the public and private sector under a single organisation that is locally accountable. Their creation signals to the market and investors the intention to focus efforts on a particular site, and provide a channel for national government support like financial investment or transferring ownership of public land.

Historically, development corporations were initiated by central government. In the 1980s the Government created the London Docklands Development Corporation which transformed the area that became Canary Wharf. The 2011 Localism Act provided mayors with the ability to create their own development corporations - the first was the London Legacy Development Corporation around the Olympic Park in East London, created in April 2012 by the Mayor of London. Devolution deals across the UK broadened the ability to create Mayoral Development Corporations, and the power has been taken up by local areas to differing degrees.

Ben Houchen, the Mayor of the Tees Valley, has been particularly active in using development corporations to support regeneration. The South Tees Development Corporation (STDC), created in 2017, brings together 4,500 acres of land south of the River Tees and includes the site of the former SSI steelworks.[142] The formation of the development corporation as a legal entity allowed the mayor to bring together land that was previously under fragmented ownership and channel £123 million of central government funding towards remediation of contaminated land. More recently, Houchen has announced MDCs in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool focussed on town centre regeneration.[143]

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill creates a new form of development corporation - Locally-Led Development Corporations - which can be created by local authorities. Local leaders looking to accelerate development of particular employment sites should take advantage of these new powers - forming public-private boards, identifying assets, and using public land and existing levers like Compulsory Purchase Orders. Private investment or national government support are not guaranteed, but are far more likely if local leaders have signalled their intent and ambition.

4.5 Local leaders can introduce Demand Responsive Transport schemes to boost physical connectivity

A lack of physical connectivity can be a significant barrier to levelling up. Inaccessible transport means residents can't access employment opportunities, businesses can't recruit and local economies don't grow. Even in an era with increased home working, the vast majority of roles still require being in a physical location for at least a part of the week. When public transport links are either non-existent or unreliable, car dependency can be a financial barrier to some and congestion will be a problem for many. And the higher carbon emissions from widespread commuting by car undermine environmental ambitions.

Transport projects can be long-term and costly. Train and tram projects often take decades to deliver. The bus network outside London has been struggling with declining ridership, particularly post-covid, and struggles to be commercially viable in low density areas. And leaders at the local authority level often need to rely on transport authorities at the regional level, who in turn depend heavily on funding and support from the national government.

Part of the answer for local leaders is Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). DRT is scheduled and operated based on the real-time demand of passengers, rather than following a fixed route or schedule. For individuals, this could include ride sharing apps like Uber and Lyft. But for whole communities, examples include shuttles or buses that respond in real time to the specific needs of residents.

Using technology that can map demand and plan routes, DRT offers a relatively low-cost mechanism for local leaders to boost connectivity and productivity. In Lawrence Weston in Bristol, a "Big Local" community group called Ambition Lawrence Weston engaged with local employers to set up a community shuttle bus that helped residents access jobs.[144] The community members used evidence of demand to advocate for a permanent bus service, which was then introduced by a private provider. An academic study of barriers to employment in Bristol found that transport factors had led to 19% of local jobseekers having left a job and 26% having missed a job interview, and argued for the adoption of DRT.[145]

In many areas, councils themselves have launched DRT offers. In Hertfordshire almost 18,000 passengers have used a service called HertsLynx: a service with three 16-seater vans that has no fixed routes, operates within a 150 square mile zone, and creates routes via an algorithm.[146] Local authorities in Essex, Leeds, Surrey, and Sevenoaks have launched similar programmes. National government has been supporting the rollout of these schemes across the country through investment and by producing a practical toolkit for local authorities in designing and delivering their DRT programmes.[147]

5. Providing community-based support to the most disadvantaged

In every area we visited, there were pockets of severe deprivation. Sometimes this was in particular neighbourhoods, like Gibbonsdown in Barry or Jaywick Sands near Clacton. Other times it was certain cohorts, like families that had experienced multigenerational unemployment in South Tyneside. One council officer working in public health told us "some communities are a few metres back from the starting line, others within the borough aren't even on the track."

Deep-rooted deprivation is often the result of decades of poverty and trauma. Fixing it does not happen overnight. This section does not focus on the steps that need to be taken in terms of national policy and public service design to solve these problems for good. Instead, it identifies a small number of initial steps that local leaders can take to make progress. It builds on "bright spots" we have observed through our research, and believe could have promise elsewhere.

5.1 Local leaders can create and support networks that build relationships among vulnerable groups

Local authorities can struggle to reach those who are most disadvantaged. Lots of individuals in poverty or with multiple and complex needs will have had difficult interactions with the state and public services, and are unlikely to step forward for another programme or initiative. This is where charities and civil society organisations have an advantage. They can more effectively identify and engage with

individuals and families most in need of support. Across the country, many local authorities and public service leaders already commission or engage with the third sector - although there is scope to do more.[148]

Harnessing and building relationships between vulnerable groups is one of the most promising strategies local leaders can take. That might mean a council connecting service users, a charity building networks of the families it engages with, or a local social entrepreneur launching a new digital platform. This relational form of public services has been supported by a range of think tanks and academics.[149] It has gained increasing attention since the pandemic, when mutual support networks in neighbourhoods flourished and proved effective and resilient.[150] And it is popular with the public: 64% of service users say they want to be able to get to know other people that use the same service.[151]

The social entrepreneur Hilary Cottam has run a range of pilots across the country building networks and relationships to tackle deprivation.[152] One programme, "Backr", was designed to tackle unemployment. Cottam based herself in a jobcentre and asked unemployed people to be part of a team along with local volunteers who were in employment. They used basic technology to connect the teams, where unemployed people discussed what sort of job they wanted and team members helped to link each other to opportunities. A PwC evaluation of Backr using a randomised control trial found that it cost one-fifth of other programs at the time and that 87% of members found work or progressed, compared with the 66% failure rates of standard job centre approaches.[153]

There are other examples where councils have taken the lead. The "Mockingbird" programme in South Tyneside brings together foster families to provide mutual support in a model borrowed from Seattle, USA.[154] One home acts as a hub, offering advice, training and support to six satellite households - which might include hosting children for sleepovers and social events or being there in emergencies. In a University of Oxford evaluation of a series of UK Mockingbird pilots 90% of families said they received good or excellent support, and participants reported higher levels of well-being.[155] The "Behind Closed Doors" programme in Leeds supports victims of domestic violence, primarily by connecting them with others in the community and with statutory services.[156]

There are a number of practical steps local leaders can take to support these networks: [157]

- Councils could commission charities to create new networks, agreeing a set of outcome metrics like reducing hospital admissions for individuals with a particular chronic condition or improving school attendance
- Public service leaders could refer service users to these networks where they exist

- Local leaders who own assets could offer them as spaces for members of the community to connect - this could include libraries, pubs, town halls, or religious buildings like churches or gurdwaras
- Charity leaders could create new digital platforms to connect people or use existing platforms like Facebook or Nextdoor
- Councils can provide training to officers in how to spot and support opportunities to build relational networks

5.2 Local leaders can launch community public health campaigns to increase wellbeing

Poor public health often underpins deprivation. Smoking, drinking, unhealthy eating, and other behaviours can prove difficult for local leaders to shift. But there is good evidence that targeted public health campaigns delivered at the community level can make a difference, particularly if local authorities used the full range of levers available to them. And the resources held by councils to make an impact in this space are significant: local authorities spend over £3 billion each year on public health from a grant provided by central government.[158]

Wigan illustrates what targeted public health campaigns can deliver. In 2018/19, over a third of children in Year 6 in the Greater Manchester town were overweight, significantly above the national average.[159] Only 40% of children were active for at least 60 minutes per day. The council launched a "whole society, whole systems" approach combining a range of interventions. A "Let's get Moving" campaign encouraged over 12,000 students at 64 schools to participate in a "Daily Mile" of walking. 200 young people were recruited as Young Health Champions, serving as peer mentors. New mothers were provided with breastfeeding support and healthy eating guidance as part of a "Start Well" initiative. The local NHS offered a specialist service that supported 324 young people with dangerous levels of obesity. And the council match funded allocations from the national soft drinks levy to invest in school facilities like gym equipment and playing fields. The campaign demonstrated early success: within a year, the number of children who were active for 60 minutes had increased by around 20% (from 40% to 48%).

Trusted local institutions can be key to delivering these campaigns. In Fleetwood, Lancashire, three GP surgeries in an area of significant disadvantage supported the foundation of 28 community groups (like choirs, fishing groups, walking groups) instead of more traditional social prescribing focussing on gym memberships. A&E attendance in Fleetwood was reduced by an average of 17% and primary care demand saw similar falls.[160] In Philadelphia, USA, the council trained librarians as community health specialists. In 2015, almost 10 percent of the libraries' 5.8 million visitors accessed specialised programs and assistance including nutrition, trauma and mental health support.[161]

Interventions to promote active travel can also improve health. An evidence review by Sport England found that of 84 studies examining the impact of active travel interventions, over two thirds (64) found a positive effect.[162] The simplest way for councils to support active travel is through the planning system and built environment, ensuring that they are investing in cycle lanes and walkways. But charities can also play a role. The Active Travel Society launched "Big Birmingham Bikes" in 2016 which gave away over 9,000 bikes in deprived parts of the city, boosting physical activity and increasing connectivity. A similar scheme has now been rolled out in Clacton-on-Sea under the name "Essex Pedal Power".

5.3 Local leaders can create Family Hubs in their areas

Families provide the first line of support when people are vulnerable. But some families need support to serve this foundational role, including interventions around health, education and early years' development. This is where Family Hubs can play a key role. They are community-based centres that serve as a one stop shop for a wide range of services, ensuring easier access for families and smarter use of local authority budgets.[163]

The Family Hubs model holds promise for the country's neglected neighbourhoods. An Institute for Fiscal Studies evaluation of Sure Start programmes (the predecessor of Family Hubs), found that hospitalisation fell by 10% for 10-year-olds and almost 20% for eleven-year-olds in the poorest 30% of neighbourhoods.[164] Through early detection of child vulnerability and opportunities for child development in early years', Family Hubs can simultaneously address both the causes and effects of low social mobility.[165]

Local leaders can accelerate the rollout of Family Hubs to reduce variation across areas. As of 2021, Essex had one Family Hub for every 146 vulnerable families and almost 1,500 children in poverty, whereas in London the same figures were 8,700 and 319,000 respectively.[166] In expanding the model, local leaders could cost-effectively use existing infrastructure, such as Sure Start buildings, and scale them up to become Hubs. There are currently 150 Hubs in England and an estimated 3,000 Sure Start Centres, with those most at risk of closure being located in some of the most deprived areas.[167] Utilising existing sites would also allow for the co-location of related services and effective signposting, crucial to tackling low levels of Hub awareness among families.[168] [169]

Even within existing Hubs, better targeting is needed. Onward has previously recommended that local councils align Family Hubs with Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs) assigned at birth, and more generally with registry offices to drive footfall, improve targeting, and ensure better data collection.[170] But data sharing between service providers remains challenging for Hubs across the country, with just under

half the Hub workforce reporting supportive IT infrastructure.[171] Local authority-wide data platforms have shown early success. In response to users' feedback to the council to not have to repeatedly "tell their story," Hubs in Essex now use the SystmOne integrated data platform, built in collaboration with the private health provider Virgin Care and charity for at-risk youth Barnardo's. [172] SystmOne data reports enabled the Healthy Family Teams to identify families in extreme financial distress, and subsequently deliver food and fuel vouchers to almost 2,500 families, 600 afterschool activity packs, and 40 laptops to families with children that were being home-schooled in 2021.[173]

Family Hubs can also sit within a wider "Cradle to Career" model. In North Birkhenhead, a network of charities led by Right to Succeed and funded by both Wirral council and local philanthropists have launched a programme targeted at deprived families. The programme offers integrated education, family support, and community services for residents, delivered by a multidisciplinary team of staff and volunteers that have a strong presence in the community. Their team-based, hyperlocal delivery model has led to quick case turnovers with minimal lengthy referrals. In only its second year running, it has supported four times the number of parents and carers compared to its first year (from 401 to 1,494), almost twice the number of child beneficiaries, and has received 46% more sign-ups to tailored family services.[174]

5.4 Local leaders can introduce new forms of community participation in their areas to develop and improve services

Common approaches to community engagement are often ineffective. Councils might hold a poorly attended town hall meeting, post adverts in newspapers, or put a press release on a website with a survey. These techniques miss the potential for members of the public to guide and shape services for the better.

The evidence behind community participation is strong. The National Audit Office has argued that "community participation is vital in ensuring value for money in public services".[175] Academic studies show that participation can improve outcomes in service delivery by harnessing a broader set of experiences and expertise.[176] And researchers have also found that participation can have benefits beyond the initial design of services, with members of the public that feel ownership over a new programme volunteering to support it and taking responsibility for its ongoing success.[177]

Across the country, local leaders are experimenting with new forms of citizen participation to design services that reach the most vulnerable:

- **West Yorkshire:** Local NHS leaders convened a citizens panel in June 2021 to improve communications around delays to elective care procedures. Nine

volunteers on the waiting list for planned care met for two hours every fortnight over 12 weeks, joined by hospital managers and clinicians. Panel members shared the negative impacts on their life and health from delays to treatment, and provided feedback to aid prioritisation and communication around care. They also proposed practical steps to reduce incorrect referrals from GPs and identified procedures that could be performed in a community setting as opposed to a hospital. West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership and Healthwatch are now rolling out these citizens panels to other NHS Trusts.[178]

- **Exeter:** Local leaders from the council and NHS involved residents in one of the area's most deprived wards, Wonford, in the design and development of a Community Wellbeing Hub. The council created a "Community Sounding Board" of residents who met regularly, both in person and online during the Covid-19 pandemic. The group identified a wish list of outcomes for the hub along with more refined proposals which were paired with quantitative research. The resulting vision – "What Wanford Wants" - emphasised access to and utilisation of green space that the council had previously overlooked.[179]
- **London:** Westminster City Council supported a peer research project that aimed to understand the needs and experiences of vulnerable 18-25 year olds living in the area. The project, "City Within a City", recruited 17 young people who conducted surveys and interviews as well as hosting 6 consultation events with young residents. Their final report was used by the council to shape initiatives to reduce knife crime by tackling underlying causes including overcrowded housing, access to drugs and alcohol and lack of safe youth spaces.

The public participation charity Involve has a "Knowledge Base" for councils and other local leaders looking for case studies or practical guides.[180]

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Appendix

Data Manual

This is a step-by-step guide to recreate the data visualisations used in the data diagnostic approach in Chapters 3 and 4 (Figures 14 -33). The graphs and maps were created using Microsoft Excel and the mapping software QGIS.

Figure 14: Gross Domestic Household Income (GDHI) vs Gross Value Added (GVA), per capita, in percentile ranks

1. From this source, download the data for 'GDHI per head of population at current basic prices' from Table 2 for each region. Select the 2019 values for all local authorities and paste it onto a new spreadsheet.
2. From this source, download the data for GVA by local authority. Choose the 2019 values from the A3 tab and paste this onto the previous spreadsheet. Make sure the values correspond to the right local authority.
3. To convert both the GDHI and GVA figures into percentile rank, use the formula 'PERCENTRANK (range of values you want converted, data value for the first local authority in the column). Use this formula for both GDHI and GVA values.
4. Select the columns that have data for GDHI and GVA in percentile ranks, go to Insert, -> add an X-Y scatter chart, and label the X an d Y axes appropriately. Select your local authority's individual data marker on the graph, and right click to change the colour and add labels.

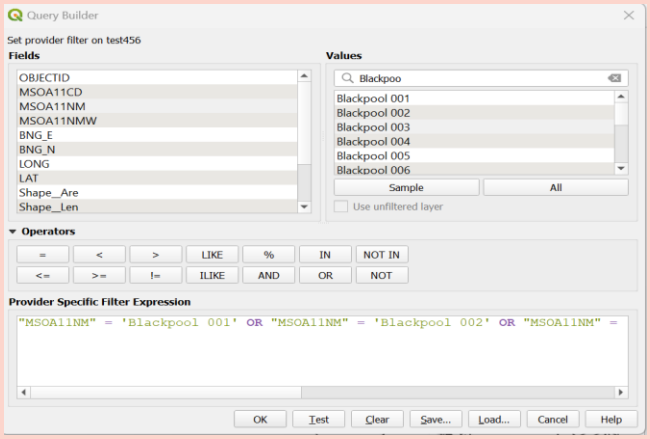
Figure 15: Social Fabric Index vs Belonging Score, 2020

1. From this source, download the Onward Social Fabric Index, select the score for each local authority and paste into a new spreadsheet.
2. From this source, download the data for 'belonging score', select the score for each local authority and paste into the previous spreadsheet. Make sure the values correspond to the right local authority.
3. Return to the guide for Figure 14 for instructions on how to convert both the Social Fabric Index score and belonging score to percentile rank and to insert a scatter chart.

Figure 16: Gross Value Added by Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), 2020

1. From this source, download the 1998 to 2020 edition of the dataset. Use Table 1 for local authorities in England and Wales (Table 2 for Scotland and Table 3 for Northern Ireland). Delete all columns other than those containing the names and codes for LSOAs, LADs, ITL1 areas, and the 2020 GVA.
2. Paste your data onto a fresh spreadsheet. Now select all the data, go to Home -> Sort & Filter -> Filter. Use the dropdowns near each the LAD Name column title to filter out the data for your local authority only. Copy and paste this data onto a new spreadsheet as save as a CSV file.
3. Download the mapping software QGIS for free from here. From the Government's official geography portal here, go to Boundaries -> Census Boundaries -> Choose LSOA boundaries for the right year (usually the latest year before your data was published) -> Download as a shapefile.
4. Open QGIS and go to Open Data Source Manager -> add delimited text and upload your CSV file with the raw data. You will see the file appear on the left-hand layers panel. Then on Data Source Manager, go to vector and upload your LSOA shapefile. You will see the outline of the country appear.

5. Right click where your shapefile has appeared on the layers panel -> Properties -> Joins -> Press the green plus icon - > Join your shapefile and your data CSV by choosing a common column title (ex: LSOA Code) -> Apply -> OK.
6. Right click the shapefile on the layers panel once again -> Export -> Save Features As -> Name your file - Apply. You will see the joined-up layer appear over your shapefile. Now untick the shapefile on the layer panel.
7. On the Layer Styling Panel on the right side, from the dropdown choose 'Graduated,' and select the value that you want dispersed on your map. Then press 'Classify' - this should produce the map of only your local authority. Right click on your joined layer on the left panel -> filter -> double click the data variable at the very bottom of the list, then type > 0. Then press OK, and press the Classify button once again.
8. Choose an appropriate colour ramp from the right hand layer styling panel, and adjust the number of classes you would like seen on your map.
9. LSOAs do not have names, only numerical codes, so to easily identify areas in the map, Middle-Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) names will have to be used. To do this, go back to the open geography portal in step 3, but this time download the MSOA shapefile. From the House of Commons MSOA names site, download the MSOA 2011 names. Use the sort and filter function (refer to Step 2) to filter get data for your local authority only. Title a fresh column 'value' and add a random numerical value to each of your local authority's MSOAs (ex: 10). Keeping only the columns value, msoa11cd, msoa11hclnm, save as a CSV file.
10. Follow steps 4-6 to add this to QGIS, except use the MSOA2011 shapefile instead of LSOA. On the left hand layers panel, drag your MSOA layer to the top of the layers panel to ensure that these boundaries are the uppermost layer on your map.
11. You only want the MSOA boundaries for your local authority to show. To dissolve the others, right click the layer -> 'filter', and a 'Query Builder' will pop up. Under 'Fields', select the variable 'MSOA name' or your equivalent. This will appear in the box at the bottom, 'Provider Specific Filter Expression'. If it is not already in quotation marks, add them like so "MSOA name" -> "MSOA name" = "[insert specific name of MSOA you want to appear]". To add further MSOAs, add ', OR' from the 'Operators' panel and repeat the above with each name you want. Click 'Ok'. You should now see the outlines of just the MSOAs for your area. The image below shows the first lines of code for this function for the local authority Blackpool.



12. Click on the MSOA boundaries, go to the Layer Styling panel, choose the labels section (just below the brush icon) - from the dropdown choose single labels to add labels by either MSOA name.
13. To save the map - go to 'New Print Layout' -> title your map -> on the pop-up window choose the 'add map' icon and scale your map to size on the white area. Repeat the same process to add the legend to your map.

Figure 17: Total annual household income by Middle-layer Super Output Area (MSOA), 2018

1. Download the data from this source for local authorities in England and Wales, this source for Scotland, and this source for Northern Ireland, and choose the 2018 figures for your local authority.
2. Then paste them onto a new sheet clearly labelling each column (MSOA Code, MSOA Name, LAD Code, LAD Name, and total annual income 2018 are the ones you need). Add the House of Commons MSOA names adjacent to this in a fresh column. Save this file as a .csv file
3. Follow steps 3-8 from the guide for Figure 16 to add your data and MSOA boundaries to QGIS, and step 13 to save your map and legend.

Figure 18: Median house prices by Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), 2022

1. Download data for median house prices, for England and Wales here (2022); Scotland here (2021); Northern Ireland here (2021). Then paste the data for your area of interest onto a new sheet clearly labelling each column (LSOA Code, LSOA Name, LAD Code, LAD Name, and median house prices are the ones you need).
2. Follow steps 3-15 from Figure 16 to add your house price data to QGIS, connect these with LSOA boundaries, use MSOA labels and save your map and legend.

Figure 19: 'Net trust' by Middle-layer Super Output Area

1. Download the data from this source (England only), selecting the 'net_trust' column and the corresponding MSOA code and MSOA name. Sort the MSOAs into percentile rank (as shown in Step 3, Figure 14)
2. Then paste them onto a new sheet clearly labelling each column. Add the House of Commons MSOA names adjacent to this in a fresh column. Save this file as a .csv file
3. Follow steps 3-8 from Figure 16 to add the data and MSOA boundaries to your map, and 13 to save your map and legend.
4. To have the same categories as used in this figure, select the joint up MSOA file from the left hand layers panel, under Classes, double click the values column, define the range you would like seen. To change the way the category labels are displayed (for ex to change the label from 0.10-0.20 to 'least trusting 10% - 20% of MSOAs), double click the legend column and type in the way you want your legend labels to appear.

Figure 20: Health deprivation and disability by Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), 2019

1. Download data for health deprivation and disability under the components for deprivation in the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019 by LSOA. For Wales here; for Scotland here; for Northern Ireland here.
2. Then paste the data for your area of interest onto a new sheet clearly labelling each column (LSOA Code, LSOA Name, LAD Code, LAD Name, and median house prices are the ones you need). Rank by percentile rank (as shown in Step 3, Figure 14)

3. Follow steps 3-14 from Figure 16 to add your health deprivation data to QGIS, connect these with LSOA boundaries, use MSOA labels and save your map and legend.

Figure 21: Recorded cases of crime, by type of crime, 2006-22

1. From this source, download the data for 'Police recorded crime open data by Community Safety Partnership separately for the years 2016-22, 2012-15, 2008-11, and 2003-07. This is the source for similar crime data for areas in Scotland, and this source for areas in Northern Ireland (Pivot Table 1 under Police recorded crime Annual Trends 1998/99 to 2021/22)
2. The next step is to merge the data in each workbook into a single spreadsheet instead of having it split across tabs. To do this, create a separate for each year's data, and convert this into a table format. To do this, select the data -> Insert -> Table, and ensure that your table is named the same thing (Table1 for example) in each spreadsheet. Collect all your spreadsheets and save them onto a single folder. Then open a fresh spreadsheet, go to data -> Get data from -> File -> Folder -> Choose your relevant folder -> Open -> Combine and Load to -> Select the name of the table -> Add. This should add all your data into a single spreadsheet. This process will have to be repeated for each year group set, for 2003-07, 2008-11, 2012-15, and 2016-22.
3. Use the pivot table function to filter out data for the following categories and sub-categories of crime for each year group: domestic burglary, public order offences, violence with injury, violence without injury, drug offences, sexual offences, violence without injury, and non-domestic burglary for each year group. The pivot table function is explained in Figure 23.
4. Select the data for your local authority only and paste it onto a fresh spreadsheet for each year from 2006 onwards. Then Insert -> Add line chart, and label your axes appropriately.

Figure 22: Recorded cases of public order offences compared to regional and national averages, 2006-22

1. From the same source as Figure 21, download the data and paste onto a fresh spreadsheet
2. Sort the data to have only public order offence crimes for each year group. Use lookup files as mentioned in the Figure 23 guide to get corresponding region and country names, and paste this besides the Community Safety Partnership column.
3. Use the pivot table function as mentioned in the guide for Figure 23 to get the data over time for your local authority, region, and country.
4. To make this data comparable, it has to be indexed against a base year. We have chosen 2006 as a base value of 100 and expressed the recorded cases of crime as a fraction of this 2006 value. To convert the recorded cases of crime into indexed form, use the formula, copy the data relevant to your local authority and paste onto a set of fresh cells. Replace all 2008 values with 100. For 2007 values and onward, use the formula =100*(2009 value/2008 value), and replicate this for each year and category of crime.
5. Then select your indexed data, including for the year 2006, go to Insert -> Line chart, and label your axes appropriately.

Figure 23: Vacancy rates for retail and leisure units, 2021

1. From this source, download the data. This is only for England and Wales, comparable data is not available for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The relevant columns needed to produce this visualisation are the first 7 columns, copy these and paste onto a fresh spreadsheet.
2. Use the sort and filter function as shown in Step 2 of Figure 16 to select only the data for 2021 and retail and leisure units.
3. Title a fresh column 'vacancy rates' and use this formula to calculate retail and leisure vacant rates for each local authority: =count_total_void/count_total. Select this data and convert into percentages by clicking the % icon under 'Numbers' in the 'Home' section
4. To get the corresponding regional average for your local authority, a lookup file will need to be used. These can be found on the opengeography portal here under 'Lookups.' These are simply spreadsheets that list all the lower level geographies and the higher level geographies they correspond to. For this visualisation, we require the lookup file for 'Local Authority District to Region.' Choose the lookup file whose time stamp corresponds to the date of publication of the data, as local authority boundaries change frequently. Download this, and copy the data and paste onto the spreadsheet with the vacancy rates.
5. Sort your vacancy data in alphabetical order by local authority code, and do the same for the lookup data you have just pasted. This will match your local authority districts to their corresponding regions.
6. To get regional averages, a pivot table is a good tool to use. Highlight all your data (local authority names and codes, corresponding regions, and vacancy rates. Then go to Insert -> Pivot Table on a new spreadsheet. From the right hand panel, drag and drop 'Region' into Rows and 'Vacancy rates' into Values. To ensure that region-level vacancy rates are in averages, click on the down arrow next to vacancy rates under values -> Value field settings -> Choose average -> OK.
7. To get a national average, use the formula =AVERAGE(select entire column with vacancy rate data).
8. Finally, copy the data for your local authority, for your regional average, and the national average, and paste it onto some empty cells. Select this data -> Insert -> Bar Chart. Label your axes appropriately.

Figure 24: Number of independent businesses, 2020

1. From this source, download the data. Copy columns A, B and T and paste onto a fresh spreadsheet. Then download population estimates by local authority, region, and country from NOMIS (go to the NOMIS webpage -> Query data -> Population Estimates /Projections -> local authority by five year age band -> select the corresponding geographies - in this case that is all local authorities, regions, and the United Kingdom, the year - 2020 in this case, and other variables, and press download). Copy the population data and paste onto the previous spreadsheet adjacent to the data for business count, such that the data corresponds to the right local authority.
2. Then title the next column 'Number of independent businesses per 1000 population.' To normalise this data by population, use the formula =number of businesses/population*1,000, and extend this formula for all local authorities, regions and countries.

3. Choose the normalised data for your local authority, region, and country and paste onto a fresh set of cells. The select this data and insert a bar chart.

Figure 25: Share of population that have participated in arts or cultural activities

1. From this source, download the data (data is not available for Northern Ireland). From the Tab B, copy the data for participation rate (%) from column I by local authority and paste onto a fresh spreadsheet
2. Similar to Figure 23, use a lookup file to match local authority names and codes to their corresponding regions.
3. Once the local authority names, codes, region name, country name, and participation rate values are in adjacent columns, use the pivot table function (as explained in Figure 23) to obtain regional and national averages.
4. Select the participation rate values for your local authority, region, and country, add a bar chart and label your axes appropriately

Figure 26: Average number of green spaces within a 1km radius

1. From this source, download the data. From the Tab named 'Urban Google Parks Only', copy the data from column I, 'Average distance to nearest park or public garden or playing field' along with the corresponding region name, LAD code and LAD name. Paste onto a fresh spreadsheet.
2. Use the pivot table function (as explained in the guide for Figure 23), to obtain your regional average. The average for your local authority is already calculated, and you can obtain the average for Great Britain using this function in a blank cell: =AVERAGE(highlight column containing all averages).
3. Select the data for your local authority and regional and national average -> Insert -> Bar/Column chart, and then label the axes appropriately.

Figure 27: Industry composition

1. From the NOMIS portal here, go to Query data -> -> 'Business Register and Employment Survey' → 'Business Register and Employment Survey: open access (2015 to 2021). Under 'Geography', select 'local authorities district' and choose your local authority from the dropdown. Choose the relevant region and country, the latest year for which the data is available. Under Industry, choose all broad industrial groups, and under Percent, choose Industry percentage, and download your data.
2. Arrange the data such that the list of industries appears in the first column, followed by the corresponding values for your local authority, region, and country.
3. Select this data -> Insert -> Clustered bar chart. Label your axes appropriately.
4. NOMIS has data only for Great Britain. For Northern Ireland data go here, and follow the same steps to create a clustered bar chart.

Figure 28: Change in industry composition over time

1. Use the same data source and NOMIS query process as in Figure 27 to obtain data for your local authority, region, and country from 2015 to 2021. For this graph, download the data in absolute count form.
2. Arrange your data with years as columns and the different geographies as rows. Title a fresh column '2015-21 change %' and use the formula = (2021 value-2015 value)/2015 value. Repeat this for each geography and industry group, and the convert into % using the % icon in the Home tab.

3. Repeat for the date from which you want to calculate change in industry competition from over time (e.g. 2015 to 2021).
4. Copy the rows of industry employment for each relevant location - Great Britain, region and local authority - and paste into a fresh spreadsheet. Do the same for both years.
5. Select the data for the change % and the corresponding geographies and industries, and use the sort and filter function (shown in Step 2, Figure 16) to reorder the data in ascending order.
6. Go to Insert -> Clustered bar chart, and then label the axes appropriately.
7. This data is only for Great Britain, follow the same steps to create a graph for areas in Northern Ireland, for which data is available here.

Figure 29: Areas reachable within 15, 30, 45 and 60 mins on public transport, 2022

1. Download the isochrone for your region from here. Isochrones are simply shapes that connect areas accessible from a fixed starting point within a certain time. This shapefile contains travel isochrones for 15, 30, 45 and 60 minutes on public transport from fixed Output Areas (OAs). First download the file as a shapefile, and then a second time as a CSV. On the CSV, keep only columns B and H (the OA21 code and isocutoff) and save this revised version as a CSV.
2. Open QGIS, then add the 'Open Street Map' layout from the browser tab on the upper left hand side. Above this layer, add your region's isochrone shapefile and your revised csv, join these layers, export, and format following step 4-8 in Figure 16.
3. From the joint up layer, filter out to choose a single starting OA. Use the filter function shown in Step 11 in Figure 16 to do this.
4. Save your map and legend following steps 14 from Figure 16.

Figure 30: Jobs reachable within 60 mins for each job within a 5 mile radius

1. Download data from Onward's Network Effects Github page here. This data is unavailable for Northern Ireland. Select LSOA code, LSOA name, LAD code, LAD name, jobs within 5 miles and job count within 60 minutes by public transport. Then paste the data onto a new sheet clearly labelling each column. In a new column, calculate the ratio - job count within 60 minutes by public transport/jobs within 5 miles.
2. Follow steps 3-14 from Figure 16 to add your transport data to QGIS, connect these with LSOA boundaries, use MSOA labels and save your map and legend.

Figure 31: Share of pupils in underperforming primary and secondary schools

1. Download the data from the Lost Learning Github page here, and copy data for primary and secondary schools onto separate tabs on a new Excel spreadsheet. This data is only for England.
2. Using the example of primary school data, first select all the data and insert a pivot table (as instructed in the guide for Fig 22). Drag LAD Name into Rows, and Total number of pupils into values (this has to be a sum), and copy the data on total number of pupils for your local authority and paste onto a new tab (name this 'share of pupils'). After removing LAD Name from the rows column, repeat this process to get regional and national sums of pupil numbers. Copy the values for your region and country and paste them into the share of pupils tab

3. Clear all selections on the pivot table, and add LAD Name to the rows section first, followed by Ofsted rating. Then drag and drop the total number of pupils to the values section. Copy the data for your local authority and paste into the share of pupils tab. We are only interested in the number of pupils in 'underperforming' schools - these are schools that have received 'Inadequate' and 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted rankings. For your local authority, sum the pupil count in these categories of schools and paste it into a fresh column besides the total pupil count. Repeat the same process for regional and national breakdown of pupil count by Ofsted rating, and paste the data for your region and country into the share of pupils tab. To convert this into % form, use the simple formula =number of pupils in underperforming schools/total number of pupils for your local authority, region and country.
4. Repeat steps 2-3 for secondary school data as well. Select the data for share of pupils in underperforming primary and secondary schools for your local authority, region, and country, go to Insert -> Column/bar chart, and label your axes appropriately.

Figure 32: Share of population by highest level of qualification, 2021

1. Go to the NOMIS portal here -> Data sources -> Annual Population Survey -> Query data -> as with Figure 27 select the relevant geographies (LAD, region, and country) and year. Under Cell, select the Tab T19 - 'Qualification by age - NVQ' and Under Total, All people aged 16-64, tick the boxes for None (no qualifications), and NVQ levels 1 to 4+, and download the data.
2. You also need to source the data on the total population aged 16-64 for the same geographies from the Annual Population Survey data section on NOMIS. Once again use the query process on NOMIS. Go to Population estimates/projections -> local authority based by give year age band -> select the data for population aged 16-64 only, and download.
3. Copy the qualification level numbers into a fresh spreadsheet for all relevant geographies and copy and paste the 16-64 population such that the geographies match.
4. Calculate the share of the total population for each area level that has each level of qualification (number with qualification/total population)x100. Click the % button to display in % format.
5. Go to Insert → bar/column chart, and then label the axes appropriately.

Figure 33: Economic inactivity by reason, as a share of population aged 16-64

1. Go to the NOMIS home page. Go to Data Sources -> Annual Population Survey -> Query data -> Choose your local authority, region, and country from the geography section and the time period you want the data for (most recent is 2022)
2. Under cell, choose 'economic inactivity,' and under the Aged 16-64 tab, select the data for 'Total' and 'Long-term sick' for all people, and download this data.
3. Copy the data for your relevant geographies (delete columns for confidence intervals and flags), and paste onto a fresh spreadsheet. Subtract the value of those who are long-term sick from the total count of economically inactive, and label this new column 'Other,' for those who are economically inactive for other reasons.
4. Using the NOMIS query process, retrieve data for population estimates for your local authority, region, and country, for those aged 16-64, and paste this in a new column

besides your count of economically inactive people who are long-term sick, and for other reasons.

5. On the next column, convert these into % form using the formula = Long-term sick/Population aged 16-64, for each of your geographies, and do the same for Other reasons.
6. Then select the data for share of population aged 16-64 that are long-term sick, and for other reasons, go to Insert -> Column or Bar Chart -> Stacked chart. Label your axes appropriately.

Figure 34: Population pyramid by 5 year age band and gender

1. Using the NOMIS query process, download the data for population estimates for local authorities by 5 year age-band for the most recent year. Choose only population estimates for your local authority and the United Kingdom, split by gender.
2. On a fresh spreadsheet, arrange your data such that they are in the following order: Age band, Male population for your authority, Female population for your authority, Male UK population, and Female UK population. Add column totals at the bottom of each column using the sum function =SUM (range of all values you want summed)
3. Following the same order of columns, on a fresh set of columns, convert the population statistics into % form for both your local authority and the UK. To do this, use the formula = pop in that age band/column total.
4. Once again following the same order of columns, on a fresh set of columns, convert the population estimates for your local authority and the UK into negative values using the formula = -1*population estimate for that age band. This allows the male and female projections to appear on either side of the final visualisation.
5. Now select this data, go to Insert -> Clustered bar chart. Right click the axis -> Format axis -> Labels -> Label position -> Low.
6. Go to Chart Design -> Change Chart Type -> Combo -> Tick the secondary axis check box for male and female UK populations. Make sure your upper and lower axes start and end at the same values. To adjust either of these, right click the axis whose values you want to change -> Format axis -> change the minimum and maximum bound values to match the other axis. Once this is done, left click the upper axis and press delete.
7. On all the bars - right click -> format data series -> Series Options -> reduce gap width to 0 and increase series overlap to 100%
8. Select the bars for your local authority and colour them differently for males and females.
9. Now select the bars for male and female UK populations (these will have to be done one after the other), right click -> Fill -> No fill -> Border -> Change colour to black.
10. Add a text box with the values for the left hand side of your x axis with the same values as the right hand side and place over the negative values.

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