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REBALANCING NORTHERN PLACES - POLICY BRIEFING

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Rebalancing Northern Places - Policy Briefing

The Government's levelling up programme intends to reduce geographic, economic, social and health inequalities.

The Levelling Up White Paper set out twelve missions that support key levelling up objectives. Two of the missions are overarching, outcomes-based, measures of success for levelling up: boosting living standards (pay, productivity, employment) across all parts of the UK and secondly, improving measures of well-being.

The levelling up housing policy focus is on increasing home ownership and improving housing quality, through achieving levels of decency. So, the role that housing plays in contributing positively to levelling up has been recognised, not just in new supply linked to job creation and growth, but also as a key part of place-making and regeneration.

Beyond the missions around home ownership, and decent standards, the housing sector connects to the overarching missions delivering on economic and social impacts for its residents.

Places in need of levelling up, are characterised by broad economic underperformance, which manifests itself in low pay and employment, leading to lower living standards in that area. The health of the local residents may be relatively poor. These characteristics are frequently the places that social housing providers are working in with over half of the most deprived 10% of local authorities located in Northern regions.

The role of housing providers in the functioning of their local economies and in addressing social issues contribute to a variety of outcomes including around employment and health and well-being. The wider, holistic impact of housing providers in local areas is wide-ranging, for example, they played a major role in the UK's Covid-19 response - with local authorities and housing associations working in partnership, they reached out to communities, identifying and targeting support. This collaborative approach is especially important now in a cost of living crisis with support and advice on financial management and debt advice increasingly needed. Local authorities and housing associations working in partnership can re-double efforts in local communities.

This report sets out more detail on each of the levelling up missions, explaining activities that the social housing sector is already engaged in within each mission, including the two outcome based measures on living standards and well-being.

Housing at the Heart of a Rebalanced Country

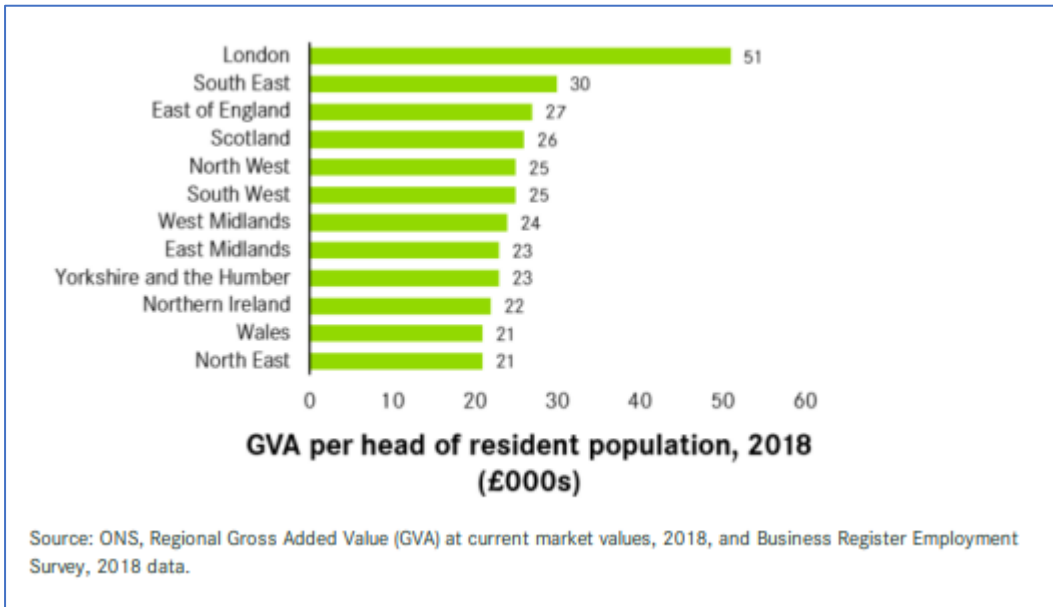
This report forms part of the NHC's commitment to working with our members to ensure that housing's vital contribution to rebalancing is recognised and valued; and to securing the policy and resources necessary to make rebalancing a reality for people and places across the North.

Mission 1: By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

The mission is an overarching, outcomes-based measure for improving economic outcomes and is fundamental to improving living standards. Improvements across all six capitals: physical, intangible, human, financial, social and institutional capital will be required.

While there are spatial disparities in productivity, wages and employment across all regions of the UK, a number of Northern regions display persistent underperformance. There is a productivity gap between the three Northern regions (North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber) and the rest of England of £4 per person per hour.¹

While Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City regions represent 42% and 20% of North West England’s economy, respectively, the core cities of Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, and Sheffield are on average 14% less productive than the UK average.²



The employment gap between the North and England in employment outcomes has fluctuated in recent years, but the North still lags behind as seen from the table below.

Labour Supply for those aged 16-64 between Apr 2022-Jun 2022³

	Economically Active	Economically Inactive
North East	75.1%	24.9%
North West	77.1%	22.9%
Yorkshire and The Humber	78%	22%
UK	78.6%	21.4%

¹ ONS Employment and Labour Market

² Levelling Up White Paper

³ ONS. Employment rate 16-64 by local authority, GB and UK. Annual Population Survey. NOMIS. 2021.

Many people living in social housing are distant from the labour market.⁴ There are 4 million households in the social rented sector, representing 17% of households and 27% of those are categorised as workless households (23% in the private rented sector).⁵ The English Housing Survey confirms that between 2019-20 and 2020-21 there was an increase in unemployment of social renters from 6% to 11%. [Magenta Living](#), based on the Wirral, use their relationship with communities to engage those who are harder to reach and help to build their confidence to engage with mainstream employment and skills services through their Inspiring Dreams programme. The programme takes a holistic approach to looking at the issues that can cause real or perceived barriers to employment and take the first gentle steps to addressing them.

Supporting Employment

Support to increase employment and skills is a priority for social housing providers and a key element of recovery strategies in left-behind areas. Social landlords tell us that this ambition is at the heart of their work by running transformative employment programmes, working closely with individuals facing barriers to the workplace as well as being significant employers in local areas.

Social landlords have a strong focus on removing barriers to employment such as support for childcare. [Wakefield and District Housing's](#) Foundation Grant Scheme awards grants to support employment by funding training, equipment, transport and childcare. In 2020/2021, a total of £66,076.55 in funding was awarded.

RSLs have agency as community anchors

Housing Associations invest heavily in their communities to help overcome barriers to employment and other services.

The North's housing sector' is strongly connected to community development perspectives and asset-based approaches. [Karbon Homes](#) invests in community organisations, supporting customers to maximise their income and get into secure, paid employment. They invested £287,843 in community projects in 2020/2.

[Bolton at Home Peer Navigators](#) are recruited from the local community to work within their neighbourhood to support people to access services, create networks and build local resilience. Sixteen people were recruited into paid employment through the Peer Network programme in 2021.

⁴ Labour Force Survey data of households reveals that households are over four times more likely to be without work if they happen to be living in social housing.

⁵ ONS employment and labour market data



Bolton at Home Peer Navigators

Significant funds have been committed towards supporting residents with skills and employment. In 2019-20, housing associations invested an estimated £76 million in their communities, of which nearly £26.5 million was dedicated to employment support. 78% of registered providers are actively engaged with the Government's flagship Kickstart employment support scheme for young people. As well as the benefit to residents of this type of support, there are benefits for the landlord through lower rent arrears, tenancy sustainment, community cohesion, injecting income into the area and the opportunity for tenants to progress to shared ownership.

Six Town Housing participates in the Kickstart Scheme and has taken on nine Kickstart trainees.



New Kickstart trainees at Six Town Housing

Working in Partnership

Housing providers work with schools and colleges on programmes involving basic skills training and provide their own support in the form of job specific training and workplace learning. [Preston City Council's](#) Community Gateway Vocational Centre provides training for up to 200 students from local schools who have struggled to engage with academic courses.

It has also implemented an annual employee 'community activity pledge' through which staff are able to spend a number of working days per year supporting local community projects.

The intervention of housing providers is particularly well developed and effective where initiatives are sector-focused, such as in the construction industry. [Cumbria Housing Partners](#) construction programme works with Cumbria Community Foundation to provide grants to community and voluntary organisations running projects aimed at improving people's employability or education, with construction a key employment sector in West Cumbria.

Investment in local areas

The power of housing sector spending can be a strong tool to boost productivity, thus supporting economic recovery, shaping supply and delivering local economic reform. Local spending power also delivers crucial social value and environmental benefits. [Thirteen Housing Group](#) invested £57m in 2020/21 in the Tees Valley economy on staff and suppliers, an increase of £9m on the previous year. Using the HACT (Housing Associations Charitable Trust) Calculator, which allows translation of the social value into the equivalent proxy, monetary value -the Gross Value Added (GVA) impact of the activities is £139m in the North East and £180m in the UK.

[Greater Manchester Housing Providers](#) spend 79.7% with organisations based in Greater Manchester which equates to £261.1 million. 4,017 jobs were created in Greater Manchester by the top 450 suppliers and 1,884 jobs were created in the local authorities in which the providers are based.

There is scope to do more, and if Government is to level-up it needs capacity to be directed to disadvantaged places. Large scale initiatives such as green retrofitting can create major training and economic development opportunities that housing associations can and should be partners in, as proposed in the Northern Powerhomes plan to decarbonise homes in the North⁶. Housing decarbonisation could provide a significant economic stimulus for the North and for levelling up. Alongside partners across the Liverpool City Region, [Torus](#), the North West's largest provider of affordable homes, is at the forefront of an ambitious new initiative to retrofit 10,000 homes over the next ten years with specific aims to develop the modular, digitised, and manufacturing sectors in the region.

If the Levelling Up missions provide a consistent medium-to-long term policy and stable environment to enable the labour market and the active housing providers to make the most effective impact, we see huge potential for housing providers to make contributions to rebalancing their communities through skills and employment.

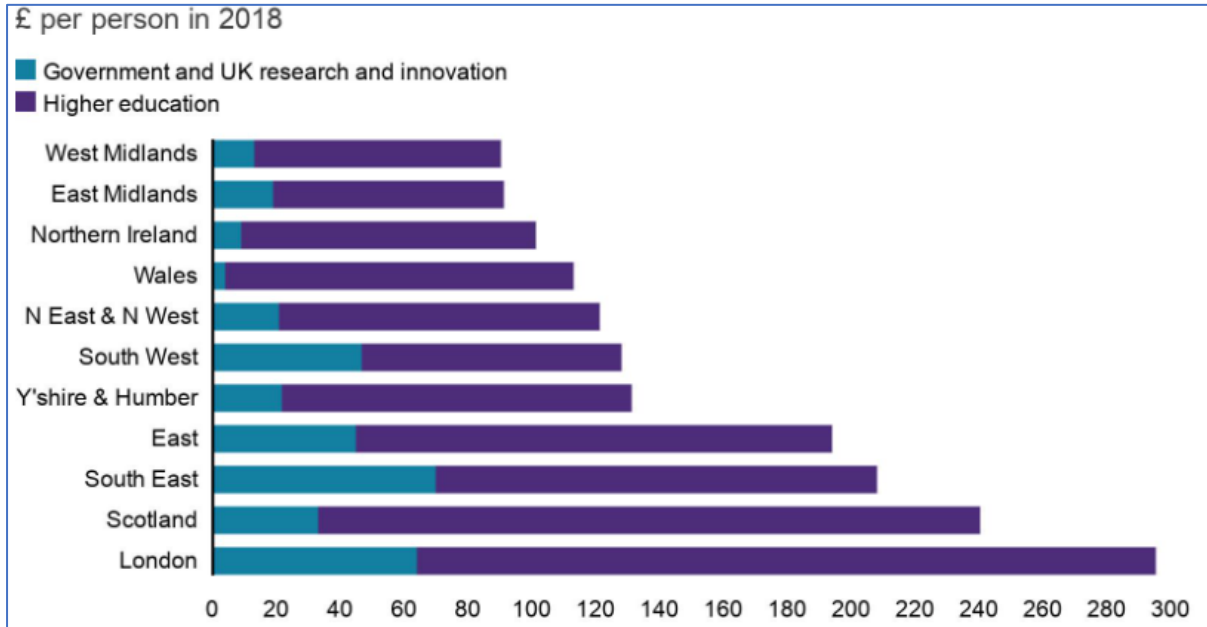
Mission 2: By 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40%, and over the Spending Review period by at least one third. This additional government funding will seek to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.

This mission aims to increase research and innovation capacity around the country. Innovative Research & Development (R&D) investment generates benefits for local populations by creating high skilled jobs and raising productivity and growth. The Levelling Up programme boosted R&D-led levelling up of regional productivity by piloting a

⁶ [IPPR Northern Powerhomes](#)

programme of Innovation Accelerators including in Greater Manchester with £100 million in funding to launch a private sector-led partnership of business, the Mayoral Combined Authority, and universities.

Regionally, there are twice as many R&D-intensive jobs located in London, the South East and the East of England combined (46%) as in the North of England (20%).⁷



Spending on R&D per region Source: IFS

The exception to this trend is research intensive manufacturing businesses, which are concentrated in the North West, and Tyne and Wear.⁸

Delivering innovative work where social housing has an early advantage includes climate change adaptation. Technology and innovation are key to delivering zero carbon buildings.

New demand for carbon-free technology could kickstart investment in R&D, bring down technology costs and progress towards housing decarbonisation. Plans for a major new hi-tech innovation hub in Greater Manchester is set to deliver thousands of new jobs and low carbon homes in the North East of Greater Manchester. Atom Valley has the potential to deliver around 20,000 new jobs, and 7,000 new low carbon homes, driving innovation in the housing market.

There is significant economic opportunity to be gained from developing the North's green economy. While home to many of the UK's most carbon-intensive industries, the North also has the potential to lead the way in creating new green industries. Much of the Northern coast such as the North Sea and Irish Sea are already being harnessed to cultivate renewable energy with three out of the five biggest offshore wind farms located in the North. The latest data suggests that as of 2020, the North accounts for 51% of England's total renewable energy generation and over one-third of the UK total.⁹

The sector is now actively using digital technologies, science, and modern methods of construction to help address the net zero carbon challenge and many are leaders in this

⁷ Onward Levelling Up Innovation

⁸ Ibid

⁹ IPPR State of the North 2021/22

space to help to accelerate innovative approaches. [Your Housing Group](#) is joining forces with the University of Liverpool’s Changing Streams Research Centre to design and build six prototype houses that they hope will provide a blueprint for sustainable home development worldwide as part of a pioneering research and development project aimed at building carbon zero, plastic-free and fuel-efficient homes in Liverpool.

The aim of energy efficiency should ultimately be about reducing energy bills and the carbon footprint of homes but it is also important to ensure technological innovations are effectively scaled up and deployed. [Leeds’ Climate Innovation District](#) is a zero carbon development working in collaboration with developer Citu. The development has been unlocked by the forward-thinking ambition of Leeds City Council and homes have been built that can use heat recovery systems and solar panels to generate much more of their own energy, while the homes use low-carbon building materials that sequester carbon, such as timber.



Climate Innovation District - Citu, Leeds

The social housing sector is regarded as a potential ‘vanguard’ for net zero housing. Innovation by social landlords will continue to be a catalyst for stimulating the supply chain as well as creating and protecting jobs and supporting innovative technologies needed to achieve low and zero emission systems to be deployed at scale.

Mission 3: By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.

This mission aims to redress geographic imbalances in the transport infrastructure, to unlock access to jobs focusing on local transport, powers for local leaders and connectivity between economic centres.

Residents in low-income neighbourhoods in Northern England report that transport barriers are ‘intimately related’ to employment options.¹⁰ Research estimates that 3.3 million people in the North live in areas where there is a high risk of transport related social exclusion.¹¹

Residents described long, multi-modal journeys with bus services being unintegrated between operators, expensive, slow and limited in hours.

Average minimum travel time 2019 (minutes)

Public transport	Access to 5000+ Jobs	Access to Town Centres
NE	30.8	21.3
NW	28.0	18.8

¹⁰ Tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods JRF

¹¹ [Transport related social exclusion in the north of England](#) Transport for the North

YH	30.4	22.6
Car	Access to 5000+ Jobs	Access to Town Centres
NE	16.1	11.8
NW	13.7	10.6
YH	15.6	12.0

Source: Department for Transport Journey time statistics 2019

Around 20% of households in the North don't have access to a car¹² and where neighbourhoods in the North are dislocated from work locations there is greater importance on improved public transport and infrastructure. Residents of social housing are less likely to have access to a car, with 36% having access to one car in comparison to 44% of home owners and 45% of private tenants.¹³

The relationship between transport and the location of new housing provides opportunities to address inequality. Transport for New Homes has stated that “the way we combine new homes with transport will determine how we travel and therefore the way we live for decades to come.”

Devolved powers allow local authorities to provide cross-boundary solutions to design and fund public transport in tandem with the expansion of a whole area. Empowering local leaders to establish integrated strategies for transport, employment and housing will be one of the benefits of extended devolution. [West Yorkshire CA](#) received £830m to help deliver a mass transit system linking West Yorkshire's cities and towns to massively improve the bus network with bus priority and more zero-emission electric buses plus more frequent and reliable services.

[Tees Valley Combined Authority](#) secured £310million to invest in local transport priorities with £40m to go towards improving bus networks in the region - with nine corridors lined up for better shelters and improved infrastructure which could mean more bus lanes and to alleviate 'pinch points.' Liverpool City Region will receive £710m for schemes such as pioneering battery technology to enable extensions to the electric Merseyrail network.

Housing providers help to ensure their tenants are better connected to jobs. Many participate in Wheels 2 Work, a scooter and bicycle scheme to support access to apprenticeships or further education and many subsidise transport to key employer locations. Buses, cycling and walking play a crucial role in enabling access to work, and not only reduce carbon emissions, but also improve local air quality and realise health benefits from active travel. [West Yorkshire Combined Authority](#) made all bus travel in the combined authority area free for a day in an initiative designed to coincide with the COP26 climate change conference last year. The initiative serves as an example of what mayors can do with the soft powers that they have. It was co-funded by the combined authority and bus operators and shows how local leaders can showcase solutions.

Connectivity in low growth locations will require joined up policy across a number of different areas – public and private investment, business growth, planning and housing and infrastructure. Achieving this mission may require funding to be decentralised as far as practical, with decisions taken locally where there is an understanding of the connection between transport and housing affordability.

¹² Department for Transport statistics. National Travel Survey. Table NTS9902. 2020 data

¹³ ONS Percentage of households with cars by tenure 2018

Mission 4: By 2030, the UK will have nationwide⁹³ gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.⁹⁴

This mission is directed at addressing spatial disparities in digital infrastructure provision. The Levelling-Up White Paper includes a target that 4G mobile coverage is available nationwide by 2030.

Achieving this mission would contribute to increased economic growth, innovation and productivity through improved digital connectivity in all places, as well as supporting those that are vulnerable or disadvantaged to access high-quality services.

Coverage varies in different parts of the country, with urban areas having better coverage than rural areas. Geographical 4G coverage reflects the proportion of rural areas in each nation and region. Countries and regions with high proportions of rural areas, such the North East, have the lowest 4G landmass coverage.

Mobile coverage: English regions and UK nations, 2021						
Nation or region	4G data (premises)		4G data (geographical)		Voice calls (premises)	
	At least one operator	All operators	At least one operator	All operators	At least one operator	All operators
East Midlands	99.4%	79.6%	99.5%	92.4%	99.9%	92.9%
East of England	99.2%	74.7%	99.96%	92.0%	99.9%	90.5%
London	99.99%	95.8%	99.99%	98.8%	99.9999%	99.5%
North East	99.7%	84.7%	91.4%	71.4%	99.9%	94.9%
North West	99.7%	82.1%	94.3%	77.6%	99.9%	95.6%
Northern Ireland	97.9%	65.8%	97.3%	80.0%	99.2%	82.0%
Scotland	99.3%	82.5%	82.3%	45.2%	99.7%	93.2%
South East	99.5%	80.1%	99.5%	88.2%	99.9%	93.4%
South West	98.4%	75.5%	97.7%	79.2%	99.5%	90.2%
Wales	98.3%	74.2%	89.8%	60.5%	99.2%	90.4%
West Midlands	99.4%	80.9%	98.8%	84.8%	99.9%	94.2%
Yorkshire & Humber	99.6%	81.5%	95.1%	83.0%	99.9%	93.9%
UK	99.3%	81.2%	91.9%	69.9%	99.8%	93.5%

Source: House of commons library April 2022

The digitalisation of the home provides opportunities across several levelling up missions – education, communication and innovation but there is also evidence of significant inequalities. More affluent households have greater access to digital devices and have greater digital skills. One in five children (of all ages) from families on lower incomes never or hardly ever uses the internet.¹⁴

Lack of access to digital technology acts as a barrier to employment. Some residents are at higher risk of digital exclusion such as those on a low income or those living in disadvantaged areas. As part of [Beyond Housing's](#) employability drive to help reduce digital exclusion they have joined The National Databank scheme through digital inclusion charity, The Good Things Foundation. Aimed at providing free internet access to those who are unable to get online, the databank hopes to support approximately 255,000 people with access to the internet over the next two years.

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for technological advancements. The importance of good digital communications, including good internet coverage was

¹⁴ [LSE \(Zhang and Livingstone 2019\)](#)

highlighted together with the need for a good digital infrastructure. Digital skills played a vital part in enabling individuals to work, access services and communicate with others whilst restrictions on daily life were in place.

A partnership between [ForHousing](#) and Openreach is bringing gigabit-capable broadband to 17,000 homes in Salford and Knowsley, enabling tenants to become more digitally connected. The social landlord has become the first in the country to have had pure fibre connectivity – known as full fibre – retrofitted to all 17 of its high-rise blocks. To date, 12,000 ForHousing homes have been fitted with full fibre, with the rest due to be upgraded in 2021.

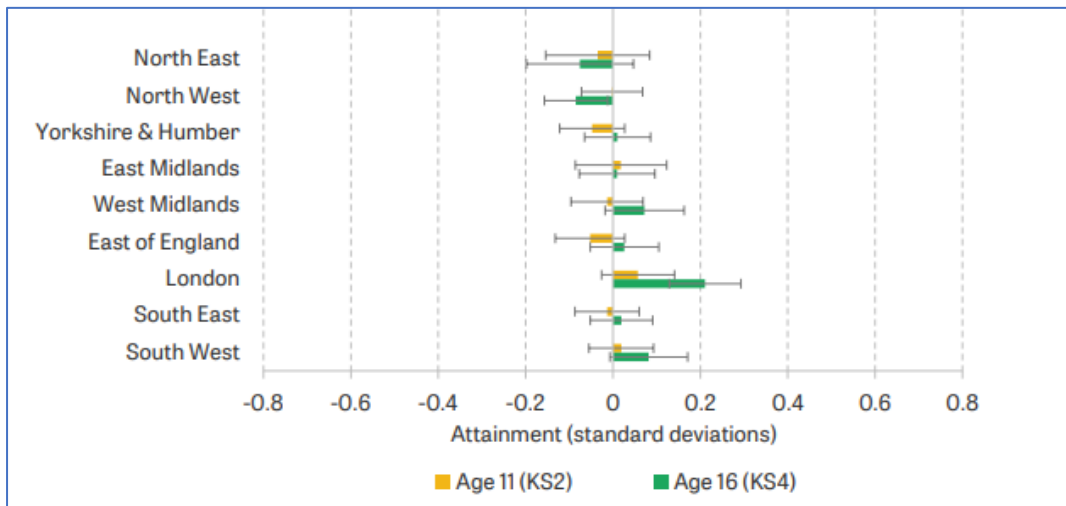
Mission 5: By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.

This mission is directed at improving literacy and numeracy and reducing spatial disparities in educational attainment among primary school children across all parts of the UK, with a focus on the worst performing areas.

One of the biggest challenges in education consists of the correlation between attainment and child poverty. Efforts to tackle the social determinants of education, such as poverty are a fundamental to reducing educational inequalities.

There are major inequalities in rates of child poverty both between and within regions of the UK. The North East has seen the sharpest increase in child poverty levels at 38%, up 7% from 2010/11¹⁵ with the North East and North West having some of the lowest levels of attainment at age 16.

Educational attainment at age 11 and age 16 by region



Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies

Social housing providers aim to improve long-term outcomes, including for children, supporting young people and helping them reach their full potential. Providing access to stable and affordable housing reduces disruptions from involuntary and frequent residential mobility and provides children with consistent learning experiences. Homes free from hazards lead to better physical and mental health and development for children. The location

¹⁵ Research carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition

of homes in safe neighbourhoods with access to high-quality schools can improve children’s educational outcomes.

Projects are wide ranging, with social landlords demonstrating what can be achieved to help disadvantaged young people. There are mixed partnership approaches; support for families and young children around school readiness and food poverty, career support helping to get people into work and projects providing support for young women.

[Gentoo’s Positive Footprints](#) changes the lives of children and young people by delivering personal development programmes in local schools that allow self-discovery, raise aspirations, and open the world of work. The closure of schools and phased reopening due to COVID-19 impacted the ability to deliver as intended, but three local schools completed the programme using technology to stay connected. The programme is potentially life changing and the benefit to young people can be seen for years to come.

Mission 6: By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest-skilled areas.

This mission is aimed at making sure that more people have the skills they need to get good jobs.

The table below shows the decline in skills achievements in England over a two-year period, a trend that is mirrored in areas with the lowest levels of skills.

Adult (19+) funded further education and skills (including apprenticeships) participation by region and level

	Total Participation		Participation Basic Skills		Participation Below Level 2	
	2018/19	2021/21	2018/19	2021/21	2018/19	2021/21
North East	117,000	86,200	26,500	18,000	27,900	14,900
North West	265,400	212,600	74,900	56,300	57,300	43,500
Yorkshire & the Humber	194,700	149,500	55,500	40,400	37,800	20,900

Achieving this mission will depend on action across Government, as well as local authorities and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs), employers and skills providers. It will require a shift in skill provision, to ensure that more people can access training that provides access to improved jobs and pay.

Metro mayors have the convening capacity to work with employers, unions, growth hubs, skills providers and other operators to assess the skills gaps in their regions. Through the development of these relationships, employers can also be supported to strategically develop their businesses and their workforce, creating realistic progression routes that benefit the organisation and the workforce.

The [Greater Manchester Housing Providers Group](#) formed Manchester Athena in 2013 to deliver training, employment and other initiatives across Greater Manchester and the North West of England to reduce inequality and poverty. Made up of 16 partners, the group works closely with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the GM Health and Social Care Partnership.

[Karbon Homes](#) has opened a new state-of-the-art Foundations Skills Hub on Stanley Front Street. The skills hub provides a place for residents of Stanley and surrounding areas of North Durham to learn and build their confidence and skills by accessing a host of services from digital skills, literacy and numeracy tuition, wellbeing support and employment advice. The services at the hub, which are free to access, are being delivered by Karbon's Foundations for Life team.



Karbon's Foundations for Life

Government identified fifty-five local authority areas as Education Investment Areas, with 28 locations in the North reflecting areas with the lowest outcomes. These include Rochdale, parts of Yorkshire and Sunderland. These areas will be prioritised as the location for new specialist sixth-form free schools. Initiatives already happening in local areas include ForHousing's Skills Centre in Salford launching in September which will give the Key Stage 4 learners a Level 1, multi-trade construction qualification including tiling, bricklaying, and joinery.

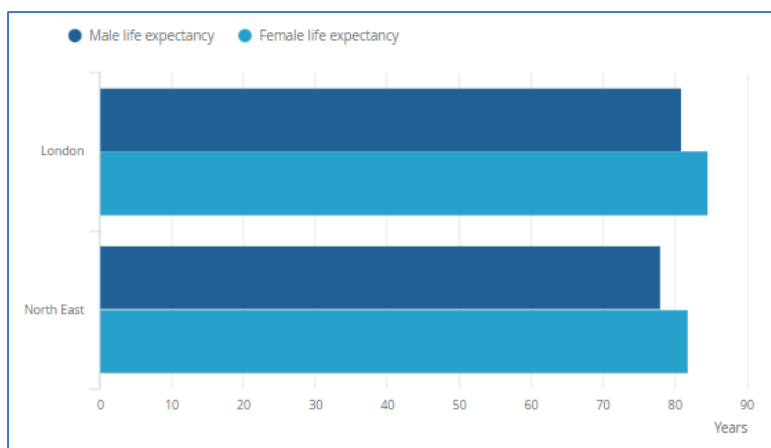
Beyond Housing, using the funding from the European Social Fund, is running New Directions, a project focused on supporting people aged between 15 and 29 who are not in education, employment or training with support to get into employment. This includes employing specialist advisors who provide one to one support, which includes general advice on finding jobs and help with securing training and work experience placements with local employers and activities to help with confidence building.

Mission 7: By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years.

There are stark differences in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) across the UK. On average, those living in the highest decile of local authorities by HLE can expect around 10.6 more years of good health than those living in the lowest decile.

The lowest regional life expectancy for both males and females in 2017 to 2019 was in the North East, with London exceeding the North East region by almost three years.¹⁶

¹⁶ Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years on Executive Summary



Source: Office for National Statistics – Life expectancy for local areas of the UK

The table below shows the change in months between 2014 to 2016 and 2017 to 2019 in Northern regions. Female life expectancy was improving more quickly than male life expectancy in the North East and North West.

	Males			Females		
	Life Expectancy in 2014-2016	Life Expectancy in 2017-19	Change	Life Expectancy in 2014-2016	Life Expectancy in 2017-19	Change
North East	77.8	78.0	2.5	81.5	81.8	3.5
North West	78.2	78.4	2.8	81.8	82.1	3.8
Yorkshire & the Humber	78.7	78.8	1.0	82.4	82.5	1.0
England	79.5	79.8	2.8	83.1	83.4	2.8

Source: [Office for National Statistics – Life expectancy for local areas of the UK](#)

Good quality housing is an important determinant of mental and physical health that could affect improvement in healthy life expectancy. As a social determinant of health, it is known that better housing and higher standards are key to addressing some of the structural drivers of health inequality. Housing quality is a critical public health issue through factors such as the impact of space, accessibility, energy efficiency and climate resilience.

Housing providers are now, more than ever, responding to a wide range of support issues beyond the home as constraints elsewhere in public finance, for example, in mental health services and other health related pressures are placing significant burdens on housing services. [MSV Housing](#) aimed to tackle loneliness as part of Mental Health Awareness week by helping residents build meaningful connections with activities at schemes and hubs, providing safe and welcoming spaces for meeting and talking.

[Middlesbrough Council's](#) Rekindle Digital Inclusion Service is a unique collaborative approach between Middlesbrough Council's Staying Put Agency and Age UK Teesside to support disadvantaged and disabled people to improve their ability to access the internet to support their health, wealth and happiness; and in reducing loneliness and social isolation.

Housing interventions can be preventative, with landlords anticipating and intervening early. [Karbon Housing](#) during the first lockdown, contacted more than 8,000 older and more vulnerable customers checking they had access to food and medicine, and customers who face more complex issues, including mental and physical health problems, addictions, and learning disabilities, continued to receive support from a dedicated Supported Housing Team, either by phone or in-person when needed.

[Bradford Council's](#) Wellbeing Board developed an all-age locality working model in 2019-20 with the aim to “upstream” intervention and place an increased focus on prevention and early help to support the wellbeing of citizens. This puts the person who needs support at the centre of everything and ensures the coordination of support around them, encouraging citizens to enjoy a long and healthy life.

Housing providers are close enough to their residents to be able to understand what supports and sustains them over time. This involves increasing quality of day-to-day life with positive experiences such as the quality and quantity of leisure time, activities and time spent with others. There are groups of people who are more vulnerable and susceptible to an unhealthy living environment, and these are often living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

[Kirklees Council](#) Better Outcomes Partnership is an arrangement with voluntary and community sector organisations, bringing together the expertise of multiple organisations to provide housing-related floating support services through a social impact bond to support people with vulnerabilities, disabilities, lifestyle issues and support needs that may impact on their ability to live independently.

The Levelling Up White Paper commits to explore opportunities for Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) to take on a duty to improve the health of their residents complementing the health improvement role of local authorities. Manchester’s MCA is able to fully integrate health and social care utilising health devolution. Across new devolution deals promised through levelling up, health and housing could be a major transfer of power which is necessary to unlock productivity and full economic potential.

Housing providers have demonstrated the benefit of working meaningfully within communities and our case studies highlight ways in which organisations are building effective partnerships with residents to benefit health. If services are to have an impact on the health and wellbeing of citizens, this additional role to support local people’s health priorities continues to be a key levelling up requirement.

Mission 8: By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

Well-being captures the extent to which people lead happy and fulfilling lives – one of the overarching objectives for levelling up. Existing wellbeing measures suggest that there are large and persistent disparities at both a regional level and local level.

People’s mental and physical health, quality of work and housing have a role in their well-being and their lived experiences in different places.

There are four well-being metrics: life satisfaction, whether we feel the things we do in life are worthwhile, happiness, and anxiety. This mission differs from the regional picture on productivity and employment with prosperous areas such as London reporting the lowest reported levels of well-being across these metrics.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? Where 0 is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'.

	NE	NW	YH	England
Life Satisfaction	7.36	7.36	7.32	7.38
Worthwhile	7.68	7.70	7.67	7.71

Happy	7.27	7.27	7.24	7.31
Anxiety	3.31	3.34	3.36	3.31

Places that incorporate health enhancing qualities, for example, a walkable environment, well-maintained green spaces and infrastructure, healthy homes with adequate space for living and working from home, the provision of community infrastructure (community and health centres, play areas) and a healthier food environment impact positively on population health and well-being¹⁷. Conversely, those living in poor quality environments, with no or limited access to local goods, services and green spaces experience poorer outcomes in terms of their physical and mental health and well-being which could increase health inequalities.

Investment in green space supports physical and mental health and well-being and as significant landowners, housing providers can make use of their land and assets in wider placemaking activities for the good of people and place as part of their wider social purpose beyond housing.

There have already been some fantastic examples of collaboration to create healthy place-making, for example through One Public Estate and the Healthy New Towns projects. [Darlington Healthy New Town](#) was a ‘coalition of the willing’ bringing to together the cumulative efforts of partners to improve health and well-being.

Interest in creating 15-minute neighbourhoods is growing within local planning authorities. The places where people live are major influences on their well-being. Having facilities within 15 minutes’ walk of home has benefits for health and well-being as well as supporting the local economy, creating some local jobs such as food outlets and ensuring more money is spent in the local community. It has the additional benefit of less use of cars, less congestion in urban areas and more active travel.

It is evident that investment in green space is key to supporting the physical and mental health and well-being of communities. Housing providers have been making better use of their land and assets for the good of people and place as part of their wider social purpose beyond housing.

A two-year project, led by Beyond Housing, transformed a 4.6-acre disused allotment site into an accessible woodland park which completed in March this year. This included planting 400 trees, and 700 metres of accessible pathways. The scheme provided employment through the Government Kickstart scheme.

At the end of each financial year social housing providers will report that wellbeing, health, support and leisure projects make up some of the largest direct financial contributions in their local areas. HACTs social value data shows that from March to October 2020, Registered Providers made over two million welfare calls, provided over half a million residents with advice and guidance, and made over 350,000 food interventions.

[City of York Council Housing Delivery Programme](#) (HDP) is delivering “the most ambitious council-led housing programme in a generation” (The Guardian); the only UK centre recognised as an international centre of excellence on high performing buildings by the UN. The programme improves health and wellbeing, reduces fuel poverty, tackles the climate emergency and supports healthy physical activity and sustainable transport choices.

¹⁷ Public Health England, 2021

[Cobalt Housing](#) has been chosen to co-lead a £350K Partnership for People and Place initiative in Croxteth, Liverpool, as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda. Bringing together health, housing, policing, local authorities and community organisations, the initiative aims to take a community-led approach to tackling a broad range of issues including increasing apprenticeship opportunities, tackling crime, health disparities, youth unemployment and poverty.

Housing Associations also provide extensive welfare and financial advice services including income maximisation and debt consolidation. The provision of social welfare and financial inclusion services such as debt advice and money guidance improve social inclusion for social housing residents by reducing stress and increasing income. People experiencing problems in these areas often have very low incomes and possibly interlinked problems.

In 2021/22, [Regenda](#) helped 1,750 residents secure an additional £2.5 million in benefits and grants. This was money that they did not know they were entitled to and was used to improve lives and sustain tenancies. Within the £2.5 million £860,000 was in Universal Credit awards.

Housing providers have reported that the demand for social welfare advice continues to grow. Karbon Homes' team of money and debt advisers, known as Money Matters, have worked with over 5,600 customers and generated income gains totalling over £5.4m in the last year.

With the Trussell Trust reporting the use of food banks almost doubling in one year, as well as providing access to spaces for growing food, gardens, allotments, housing providers are involved in summer food programmes with third sector organisations, as well as support directly to people living in areas of food insecurity. [The Guinness Partnership](#), through a network of 'food pantries' have helped over 1,350 households to access affordable, healthy food by paying a weekly subscription for groceries at low prices.

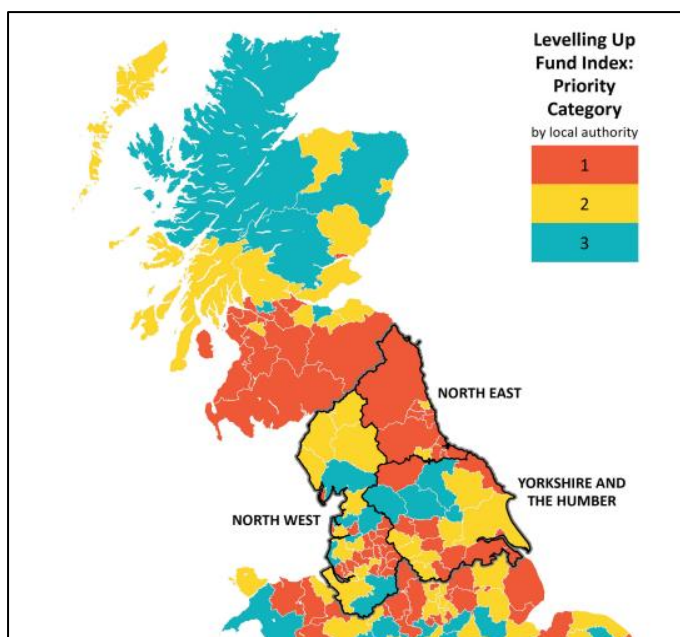
With connections across diverse communities, social housing providers will continue to make sure they are part of the solution in tackling health inequalities. There is a real opportunity to link levelling up to housing and to health inequalities and form a cross-cutting policy aligning the interdependencies of housing, health, and well-being.

Mission 9: By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

This mission is about the extent to which people are satisfied with the place they live.

The towns and cities in England with the largest percentage of deprived areas are in the North and this has an impact on educational attainment, employment and health with varying levels of local area satisfaction linked to community engagement, local heritage, cultural offers, access to local amenities, and quality of town centres.

The £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund is intended to invest in high priority local projects needed to improve lives. The intention is to focus investment on projects which make the biggest difference to everyday lives, particularly in ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities.



Levelling Up Fund Priority Categories

Northern regions received 41% of the Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal allocations to the Northern regions totalled over £1bn, which provides welcome opportunities. Town Investment Plans produced by the Town Board are potentially supported by capital investments of approximately £25m which means that projects can be transformational.

The sheer variety of projects and bids across the North illustrates the scale of the challenge at hand.

The largest towns fund allocation in the North is worth £39.5m and was allocated to Blackpool to deliver seven projects by 2025/26 - a huge boost to the town's regeneration. This includes [Blackpool multiversity](#) (£9m) to create a world class university learning environment in the town centre, helping to address local skills needs and Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone (£7.5m) creating a new road to open development sites to attract jobs and investment. The scheme will support business and jobs growth, opening up 10.5 hectares of previously inaccessible development land.

Local councils have a vital leadership role to play in revitalising and repurposing town and city centres. They are uniquely placed to bring together the voice of communities, manage competing demands, land supply and public services. As community leaders they are able to connect planning, housing, buildings conservation, public transport, highways and parking with strategic coordination.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority launched the [Town Centre Challenge](#) in 2017 activity is underway across nine towns. The first Mayoral Development Corporation focusing on a town Centre was launched in Stockport in September 2019 and funding through the Future High Streets Fund is moving this work forward. Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham and Cheadle were selected in 2019 for a new generation of Town Deals. Last December Bury was nominated as the first Town of Culture.

There are many examples of councils demonstrating leadership in helping their town centres and high streets adapt to the economic, demographic, social and technological challenges they face.

[Stockton Council](#) is receiving support through the Future High Streets Fund and has ambitious plans to demolish a failing shopping arcade in Stockton-on-Tees and replace it with a new riverside park. The park will include an extension of the market square at the northern end, with space for adjacent restaurants and cafes to spill out on to and for outdoor events.

Barrow-in-Furness was the only authority in Cumbria to earn a priority one status from the Government's list of applicants for the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund. Coupled with the [Town Deal funds Barrow](#) now has more than £40m of inward investment earmarked for a series of projects which include better connectivity with the rest of the town through improvements to transport infrastructure and the public realm.

The [Liverpool City Region Town Centres Commission](#) established in January 2020 concluded that finding ways to increase and diversify the supply of housing in or very close to town centres was a priority. A comprehensive plan for town centre housing can help to revive town centres with planning authorities developing new ways to work closely with private and social housing developers to overcome financial viability and land ownership challenges.

From the case studies, Northern councils are demonstrating they are playing a critical role in delivering and managing the long-term vision for successful places, but many are hampered by insufficient resources. The levelling up proposals aim to provide councils with additional planning fees and more powers to promote town centre revitalisation. Whilst the increased fees alone will not address the shortfall in funding for planning departments, it is a step in the right direction.

Mission 10: By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest-performing areas.¹³¹

This mission aims to provide a path to home ownership for first-time buyers and improve the standard of rented housing.

The Levelling Up White paper identifies home ownership with stronger social capital, and an increased sense of belonging and more investment in local areas.

However, the proportion of households owning their home has fallen in all regions between 2003 – 2020 falling 5% in the North East, just under 6% in the North West and just over 6% in Yorkshire and the Humber.¹⁸

A key driver has been deteriorating affordability ratios in every region, which is not helped by Northern markets experiencing a house price boom.

Sales affordability in the North West and Yorkshire & The Humber has declined for both the lower quartile and median price/earnings ratios. On lower quartile earnings, it could take up to 11 years to save for a 10% deposit. Living in market rented housing does not help as private rents have grown 11.8% year on year. In the North, Yorkshire & The Humber and the North West have broadly kept pace with that.¹⁹

¹⁸ English Housing Survey

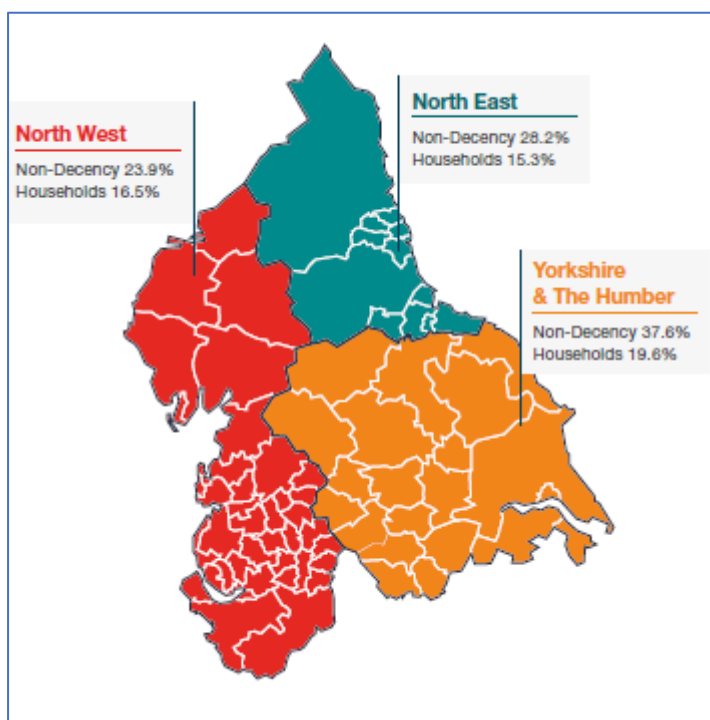
¹⁹ Northern Housing Monitor 2022

The social housing sector plays a central role in providing affordable, flexible housing choices. In the year up to March 2021 Housing Associations had invested £7.9bn in new supply and invested £1.6bn on existing properties. Two thirds of the top 10% of the highest performing housing delivery authorities are in the North. Yet, the North faces a 45% shortfall in affordable housing delivery, when assessed against need. The highest shortfall is in the most affordable social rented homes. Lower income tenants and local authorities therefore depend upon private renting to prevent homelessness. The households using the private rented sector has widened and includes more families with children and older households. The sector is clearly underinvested.

The levelling up headline metric for housing quality is the proportion of renters living in housing that does not meet the decent homes standard. The majority of social rented properties are of decent standard and snapshot surveys give a sense of the scale of investment in repairs and maintenance. In 2020 housing associations revealed that they spent £3.5bn on repairs in the previous year.²⁰

In 2020, 13% of dwellings in the social rented sector failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard which was lower than the proportion of private rented (21%) and owner occupied (16%) homes.

Currently, 30% of the North's private rented homes do not meet the Decent Homes Standard, with particularly high rates of failure in Yorkshire and the Humber (37.6% - the highest of any region in England).



Source: Northern Housing Monitor 2022

Sub-standard homes clearly have consequences for their occupants – in terms of hazards, higher energy bills and longer-term health impacts. But they can also blight neighbourhoods. Private renting in the North is often concentrated in particular localities – nine of the top ten neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations of private renting can be found in the North.

²⁰ Inside Housing Snapshot Survey 2020

In some of these high-density, poor-quality neighbourhoods, councils find that selective licensing is an effective tool. [Liverpool City Council](#) has renewed its selective landlord licensing scheme which covers 16 of the city's wards. Licensed properties must meet fire, electric and gas safety standards and be in a good state of repair. Licence holders must also be able to deal effectively with any complaints about their tenants and anti-social behaviour.

Halving the number of non-decent rented homes would require a considerably faster rate of improvement than the current trajectory. Our assessment in the North is that approximately 360,000 private rental properties are below decent standard and would therefore need an upgrade within 8 years.²¹ If the rate of improvement from the last five years was to continue until 2030, the number of non-decent homes would drop by around 10%.

[Hull City Council](#) is a good example of a Local Authority investing in the private rented sector to raise and enforce standards. The private rented sector in Hull accounts for 20% of all housing in the city. Through securing external funding and working with partners the council has delivered leasing schemes for community partners; the acquisition, demolition and building of new housing; and landlord loans. Of notable interest, Hull City Council has undertaken a programme of external solid wall insulation and frontage boundary treatments.

Since the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, DLUHC has issued consultation on introducing a Decent Homes Standard in the Private Rented Sector.

Mission 11: By 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.

This mission aims to restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.

Neighbourhood crime which includes robbery increased 11% from the year ending March 2021. The largest increase was seen in the North East (24% increase), the North West (22% increase) and the West Midlands (22% increase), although levels in all three regions remained lower than in the pre-coronavirus year ending March 2020.²²

The police recorded 1.8 million incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the year ending June 2021, an increase of 7% compared with the year ending June 2020.²³

Local authorities, the police and social landlords share responsibility for tackling ASB at a local level.

The Social Housing White Paper mentioned ASB no fewer than 26 times and it is clear that landlords will have a role in tackling the issue. All social housing landlords have a duty to publish policies and procedures to help them deal with reports of ASB. Social housing landlords will be given support to tackle anti-social behaviour through a new advisory group launched by Government as the first Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness week was launched (18 July 2022). [Gentoo housing](#) is part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Panel which will aim to publish its good practice guidelines for social housing landlords and the wider sector on tackling antisocial behaviour later in 2022.

[Believe Housing](#) signed a joint pledge with the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Durham County Council and other housing associations, to tackle antisocial behaviour

²¹ Northern Housing Monitor 2022

²² ONS Crime in England year ending March 2022

²³ ONS Crime in England year ending March 2022

together. The pledge was made in response to feedback from more than 1,200 County Durham residents last year and states that: "Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Durham County Council and Housing Associations working in the county will continue to work together to put those affected by anti-social behaviour first."



Local authorities, the police, and sometimes social landlords can issue Community Protection Notices to address a wide range of problems such as littering. Middlesbrough Council's environmental flying squad is a new approach to tackling environmental crime. The team is made up of specialist environmental officers and area waste operatives, supported by a neighbourhood safety officer. They have created a "sort it not report it" team who specialise not only in fly-tipping investigations but all environmental matters, such as littering, public space protection order enforcement, untaxed vehicles and commercial waste issues. New technology called All on Mobile uses an app to investigate offences.

Regeneration of an area can turn around areas blighted by neighbourhood crime and ASB. Two estates in Hartlepool which were blighted by anti-social behaviour and homes in need of updating have been turned around following a scheme by Home Group to upgrade the area. Customers in Clarence and West View estates in the town have had their pride restored in their estates. Investment delivered a choice of housing in Hartlepool with a real focus on affordability, safety and security, and sustainability with a bigger presence of Home Group colleagues out in the community which helped to address issues on the estates.

Mission 12: By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

The devolution framework, which is at the heart of the levelling up programme, promises to deliver devolution deals by 2030 to all areas that want one. Levelling up will only be successful if power and funding is devolved to places for long-term solutions.

The starting point for many deprived communities is further behind having seen lower levels of investment. Left behind neighbourhoods receive on average £827 per head to spend on core local government services compared with £843 across England as a whole, despite higher overall levels of need.²⁴

²⁴ APPG Evidence Left Behind Neighbourhoods Communities of Trust

Success will be measured by the proportion of the population living in an area with the highest level of local devolution. But this isn't just about numbers. New devolution deals will need budgets and greater fiscal power to truly level up.

At present, only 41% of the English population are covered by a devolution deal and even in areas where devolution has taken place, they do not have the same range of powers as Greater Manchester. Currently, six regions across the North have elected Metro Mayors with deals controlling multi-million pound investment funds, and powers over skills, transport, planning and housing, growth, employment and a number of other areas.

	Population (m)	Size (km2)	Deal
Greater Manchester Greater Manchester Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan, Manchester, and Salford.	2.8	1,276	The first devolution deal, and the only to include control over Health and Social Care - worth £6bn in Greater Manchester.
Liverpool City Region Liverpool, Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens, and Wirral	1.5	724	£900m investment Growth focused deal, with a Single Investment Fund that will promote the city region as a world class place for business. In 2016, Liverpool was a pilot area for the 100% business rates retention scheme. Successes include green transport, free travel for apprenticeships and the planning of Mersey Tidal Power scheme.
Tees Valley Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesborough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees	0.7	795	30-year investment fund, adult skills funding, Transport (very limited), Land and Housing (limited)
South Yorkshire Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield, and the LEP	1.4	1,552	£1.3bn investment for skills, employment, transport, housing and business support
North of Tyne Newcastle, North of Tyneside and Northumberland	0.8	5,209	£600m investment fund, Inclusive Growth Board and an Education Improvement Challenge (similar to London's), as well as £23m devolved Adult Education Budget.
West Yorkshire Leeds, Kirklees, Wakefield, Bradford and Calderdale	2.3	2,029	£1.8bn investment with a deal signed in March 2020 provides the area with significant new powers and funding to increase opportunities and living standards through inclusive growth and productivity improvements.

Source ONS mid-2018 population estimates and ONS standard area measurements

The devolution of housing and planning powers differs from place to place, most include some housing measures but not all and this is an area with further scope for devolution of powers. Powers vary to make compulsory purchase orders, create statutory spatial plans, or

to call in planning permissions. Greater Manchester's efforts to tackle homelessness, and Liverpool's spatial plans have been particularly successful, and Tees Valley has established a development corporation.

Progress since the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper has included a 30-year investment deal within Yorkshire to drive growth, establishing a combined authority. North Yorkshire Council, a single new council for the region, will operate from April 2023, replacing the current county council and seven district and borough councils.

Setting out clear principles and a process for devolution alongside coherent and comprehensive housing policies would strengthen devolution going forward.

Conclusion

As our case studies have shown local authorities and housing associations are already delivering positive work. By progressing this work across the 12 levelling up missions they can maximise their impact in places and support delivery of the wider rebalancing programme.

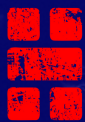
There is no doubt there are some enduring challenges, including the spatial concentration of disadvantage in left behind places, the negative effects of poor-quality housing on the private rented sector, and a continuing energy inefficiency in the context of rising prices and changing climate.

Against the backdrop of building new affordable housing, improving building safety and progress on energy efficiency, the social housing sector is addressing inequalities which existed well before the cost of living crisis and the levelling up reform agenda.

Levelling up is a long-term policy that transcends short-term goals and runs beyond political timeframes. There is a desperate need for it; it has a clear mandate; and there is already a strong plan in place. There is a momentum behind pushing on with that plan to encourage growth, spread opportunities across the UK, and abolish regional inequalities.

For information about this report and the Levelling Up missions please contact:

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