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LEVELLING-UP IN THE NORTH EAST REGION

**What has been achieved in the
last three years? An Assessment**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Levelling up has been the flagship policy of the Boris Johnson Conservative government, with Liz Truss declaring a continued commitment to the plan. Johnson promised a levelling up policy to deliver a new policy agenda in the UK and to address the north-south divide, to focus on the deep-seated inequalities in regions like the North-East.

In 2022, it is still not clear what ‘levelling up’ means and what it is achieving. A previous Cameron and Osborne Conservative commitment to the Northern Powerhouse and the three regions of the north of England appears to have now faded. There has been a new focus on the promise of levelling-up with the White Paper and the Cabinet office levelling-up Unit, now moved to the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and a renewed commitment to devolution albeit for counties, not city-regions.

At a time when Levelling Up was the Government’s flagship priority, it allocated £4.8 billion to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) but spent less than 3% of it in 2021-2022- only £107million of this total. In the North-East region, only 6% of the national allocation for LUF Round 1 was approved, totalling £100 million, with much remaining still to be spent.

There is a major problem with capacity in local government and capability in central government. Furthermore, there is too little regional and local evaluation of what is being achieved. This working paper analyses the available evidence on the North-East and asks what should be done next.

Each sub-region needs a clearer plan and framework to 2030 and to clarify the priorities in each city-region, local authority and County area. The Levelling-Up Unit needs to focus on joined-up programmes and action with programmes to tackle and shift poverty and deprivation as well as focusing on economic growth. The focus on competitive LUF, the Community Renewal Fund bids, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) all need better coordination and integration and clearly agreed investment plans. Furthermore, there is a need for local dialogue on the needs of specific, targeted communities and groups. Not all LUF Round 2 bids will succeed, raising the question of whether there is to be a LUF Round 3 under the new Truss administration and what the priorities will be.

2 What are the Levelling Up Funds?

2.1 In August 2022, the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee stated, “it is the Committee’s view that the main tool to achieve levelling up will be through appropriate funding to those areas that need it most”.¹ Since 2019, there have been four primary targeted levelling up funds:

- The Community Renewal Fund
- The Towns Fund
- The Levelling Up Fund
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

2.2 The Community Renewal Fund

Announced in March 2021, the fund’s purpose was to prepare for the introduction of the new UKSPF, the government’s replacement for the EU structural funds. As Table 2.1 shows, the North-East received only 4% of the total funding. In pursuit of ‘shovel ready’ projects, successful bids in the North-East are listed in Table 2.2, the Government asked Local Authorities for all projects to be completed by March 2022. However, funding delays by Central Government led to the deadline being extended by six months to 30 June 2022. Much has been said about the tight deadlines for spending and the lack of focus on community and social enterprise development.

Table 2.1 – Community Renewal Fund Awards by Region and Country

	No. Awards	% Total	£ millions	% Total
Wales	165	35	47	23
Scotland	56	12	18	9
South West	37	8	22	11
East	37	8	19	9
East Midlands	34	7	19	9
Northern Ireland	31	6	12	6
North West	28	6	12	6
South East	25	5	14	7
West Midlands	25	5	16	8
Yorkshire and Humber	19	4	12	6
North East	14	3	8	4
London	6	1	4	2
UK	477	100	203	100

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Despite this extension, less than 3% of projects were completed by the deadline.² With a lack of resources, local authorities lack the capacity to reach the deadlines being set nationally.

Austerity has seen local government capacity diminished, with IPPR North estimating a 31% reduction since 2010.³ With a revolving door of competitive bidding funds, local authorities are placed in a difficult position to prioritise and bid for funds. Preparing such bids is hugely time-consuming. For example, Sunderland County Council officers said it took them 270 hours of office time to apply for the Community Renewal Fund.⁴ The Whitehall failure to understand the complexity of delivering and implementing projects on the ground in local communities remains problematic.

Table 2.2 – North East Community Renewal Fund Awards

Lead Authority	Project Name	Total Value
Durham County Council	Emerging Markets Innovation Accelerator	£836,724
Gateshead Council	Future Markets Acceleration Programme	£130,812
Gateshead Council	FUTURE YOU	£748,616
Gateshead Council	Gateshead Riverside Partnership	£558,250
Gateshead Council	National Centre for Immersive Technologies (NCIT) Pilot Programme	£747,122
North of Tyne Combined Authority	Breaking Barriers through Digital Skills; A Pathway to Digital Employability for the North East	£808,008
North of Tyne Combined Authority	NEW START - Strengthening the North East's Foundational Economy through innovative employability measures	£730,944
Sunderland City Council	Community Renewal Grants	£514,566
Sunderland City Council	Future Markets Acceleration Programme	£196,218
Sunderland City Council	Innovate for Good	£533,867
Sunderland City Council	REACT	£146,316
Tees Valley Combined Authority	Tees Valley Business Challenge	£826,277
Tees Valley Combined Authority	Towards the Tees Valley Energy Transition - Residential Decarbonisation and Skills Analysis	£736,580

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

2.3 The Towns Fund

First announced in July 2019, the Towns Fund is set to “invest £3.6 billion into over 100 towns, as part of the government’s plan to level up our regions.”⁵

The fund has three separate strands:

1. 101 of 541 towns in England were selected to bid for ‘Towns Deals’.
2. Further bidding round for those towns not selected as part of the initial 101 towns.
3. The Future High Streets Fund

2.4 The 101 ‘Town Deals’

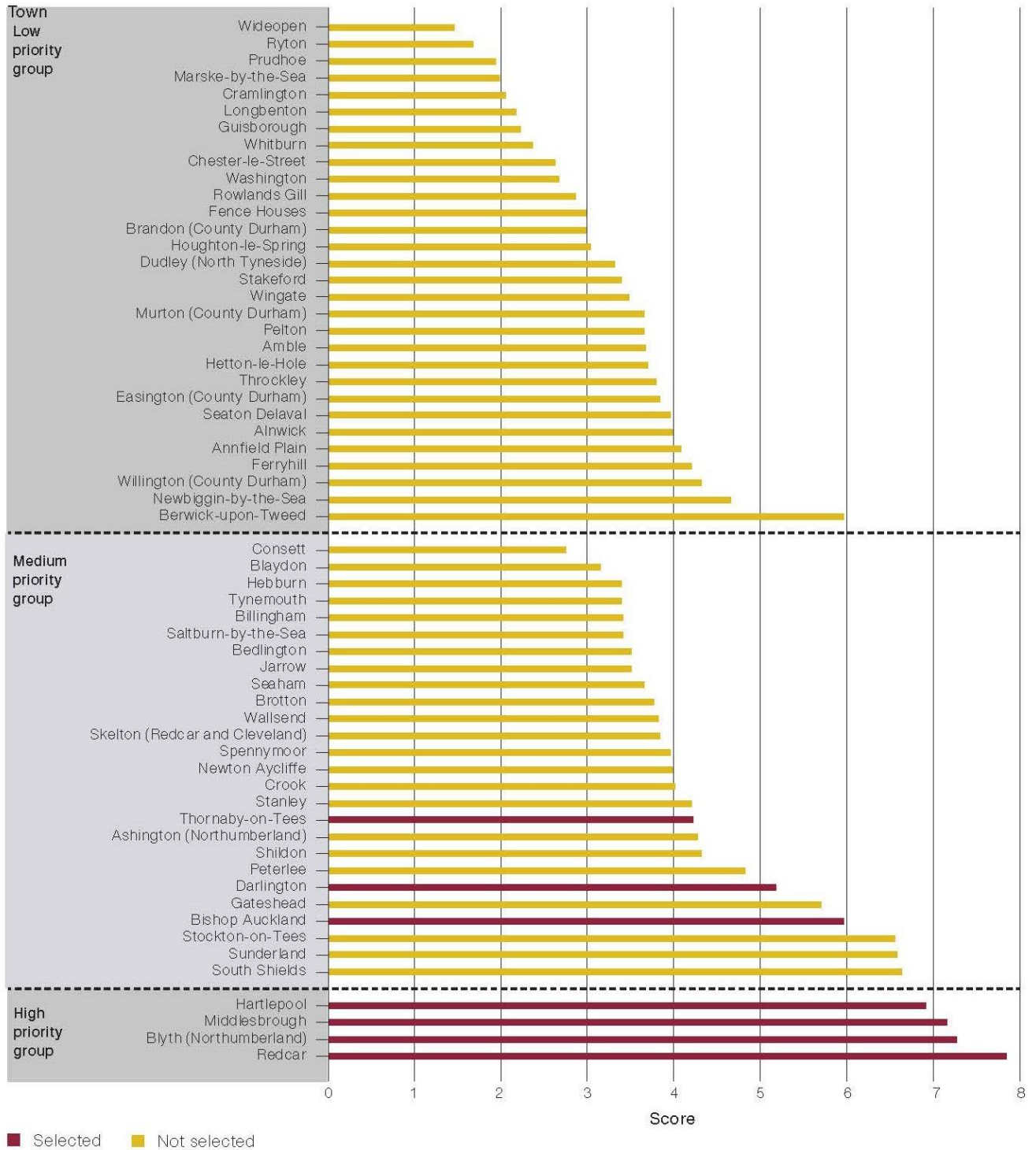
Towns were designated as eligible to apply for funding based on a formula that considered, income deprivation, skills deprivation, productivity, EU Exit exposure, exposure to economic shocks, investment opportunity and alignment to broader government interventions. Tables 2.3 and 2.4 show that the North-East received only 7 awards totalling £172m, which was only 7% of the overall national allocation. The ranking of the towns in the North-East can be found in Figure 2.1 below, taken from the National Audit Office analysis of the bidding process.⁶ Four of the seven towns awarded funding in the North-East were designated high priority, and three as medium priority.

Table 2.3 – Towns Deal Awards by Region

	No. Awards	% Total	£ millions	% Total
North West	20	20	486	21
Yorkshire and Humber	18	18	422	18
East Midlands	14	14	346	15
West Midlands	15	15	328	14
East of England	12	12	288	12
South West	9	9	199	8
North East	7	7	172	7
South East	5	5	110	5
UK	100	100	2,350	100

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Figure 2.1 – North East Towns Selected/Not Selected By Ministers To Bid For Town Deals, Ordered By Score



Note
 1 "Score" denotes the total score given by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government across seven assessment criteria which were intended to capture each town's level of need and growth potential.

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Table 2.4 – Town Deals in the North East

Town	Funding (£ millions)	IMD for Constituency of Town
Bishop Auckland	33	110
Hartlepool	25	52
Redcar	25	74
Thornaby-on-Tees	24	284
Darlington	22	126
Middlesbrough	22	8
Blyth	21	133

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Government received criticism over the selection process, with the Commons Public Accounts Committee concluding that “the selection process was not impartial.”⁷ The committee also took note of the Government’s failure to consult local stakeholders, despite officials’ recommendations to do so, on the basis that Ministers had favoured their own judgement. An extra layer of governance to oversee the fund was also created in the form of Town Deal Boards, adding to the already complex governance structures in a region like the North-East. Whilst the Town Deal Boards are focusing on their strategies, many plans are still evolving.

2.5 The Future High Street Fund

The Future High Streets Fund is the third element of the Towns Fund to “renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves experience and ensures future sustainability.”⁸ Figure 2.2 provides a map of High Street Fund allocations across the North-East. The North-East has received £100 million from the fund (see Tables 2.5 and 2.6). Three towns, Bishop Auckland, Middlesbrough, and Blyth received funding from town deals *and* future high street funds. On a regional basis, the North-East received seven allocations totalling 11.86% of the funding. This is much higher than the allocations for other, wealthier regions of England, such as the East of England. The funding spread makes sense from the perspective of levelling up the country, however, a similar pattern has not been achieved with the main levelling up funds.

Table 2.5 – Future High Streets Fund Allocations by Region

	No. Awards	% Awards	£ millions	% Total Funding
East Midlands	7	9.72	63	7.59
East of England	3	4.17	23.9	2.88
London	6	8.33	56.5	6.8
North East	7	9.72	98.5	11.86
North West	13	18.06	168.6	20.3
South East	7	9.72	39.2	4.72
South West	11	15.28	138.5	16.68
West Midlands	10	13.89	146	17.58
Yorkshire and Humber	8	11.11	96.2	11.58

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Future High Streets Fund: Successful and Unsuccessful Applications

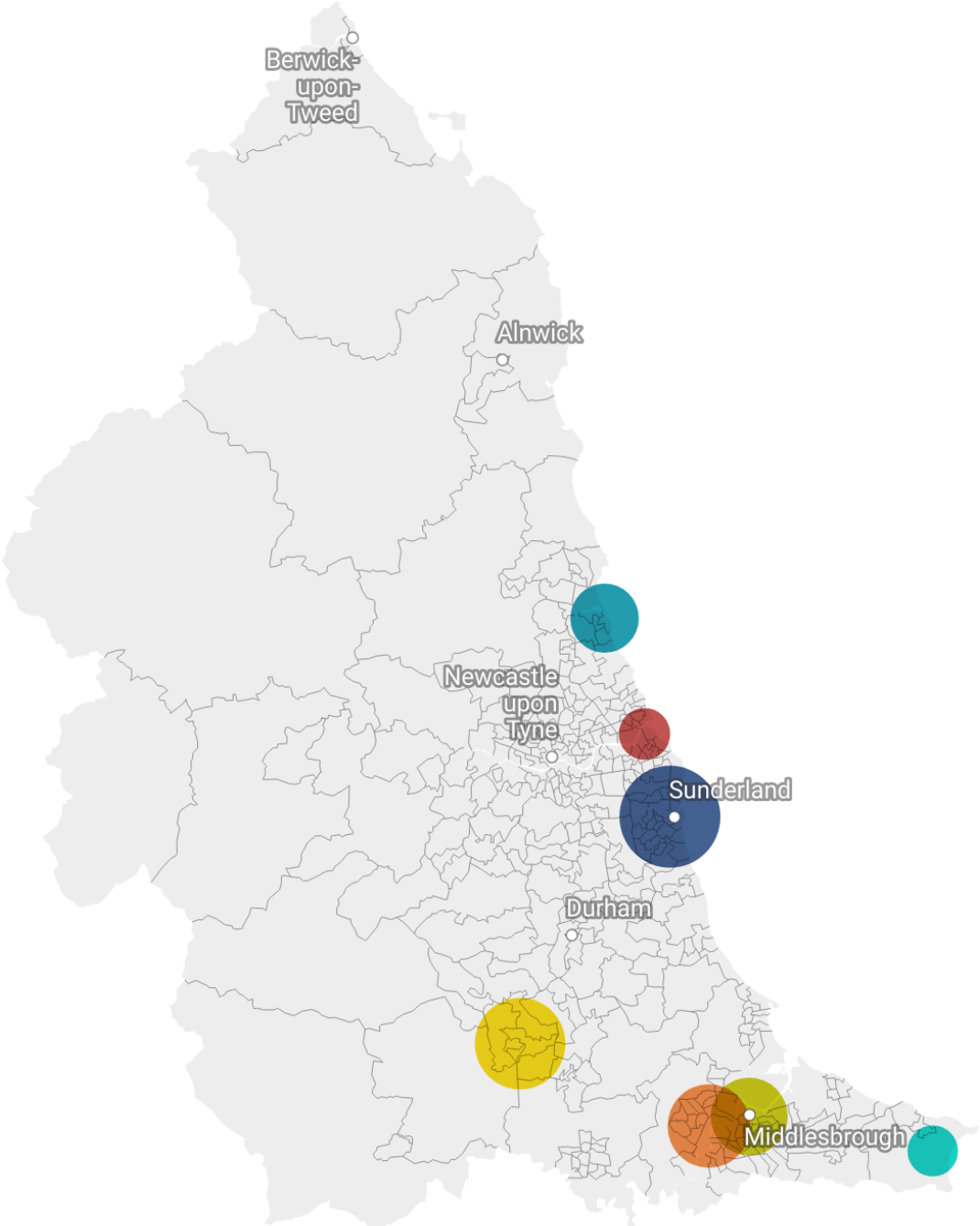
Table 2.6 – Future High Street Fund Allocations in the North East

Local Authority	Town Centre/High Street	£ millions
Durham	Bishop Auckland	19.9
Northumberland	Blyth Town Centre	11.1
Sunderland	Sunderland City Centre	25
Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough Centre	14.2
Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton Town Centre	16.5
South Tyneside	South Shields Town Centre	6
Redcar & Cleveland	Loftus	5.8

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Figure 2.2 – Map of Future High Street Fund Allocations in the North East

- Bishop Auckland
- Blyth
- Loftus
- Middlesbrough
- South Shields
- Stockton-on-Tees
- Sunderland



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2021 • Created with Datawrapper

2.6 The Levelling Up Fund

The £4.8 billion fund, launched in November 2020, allowed each local authority to make at least one bid. Successful bids were announced in October 2021, four months after the application deadline. In total, the Government received 305 bids and a total of 105 were successful. Of the successful bids, five were given to County Councils (Derbyshire, East Sussex, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, and Somerset) and only one to a combined authority (Liverpool City Region Local Authority). Table 2.7 shows the successful Round 1 bids.

Table 2.7 – Levelling Up Fund Round One Successful Bids

	No. Awards	% Awards	£ millions	% Total Funding
North West	12	11	232	14
East Midlands	10	10	203	12
West Midlands	11	10	196	12
Yorkshire and Humber	10	10	187	11
Scotland	8	8	172	10
South East	11	10	151	9
South West	6	6	131	8
Wales	10	10	121	7
North East	5	5	100	6
East of England	5	5	87	5
London	6	6	65	4
Northern Ireland	11	10	49	3
Total	105	100	1,693	100

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities,

The North-East had five successful bids worth a combined value of £100 million, the fourth lowest combined value worth only 6% of total funding. Details of the successful North-East bids are as follows:

- **County Durham - £20,000,000 – Bishop Auckland Transport Infrastructure Improvement Project**⁹

The successful bid centred around three projects: the development of the railway Museum Locomotion in Shildon and the Stockton and Darlington Railway line, the reopening of Whorlton Bridge and the creation of a new bypass.

- **Newcastle Upon Tyne - £19,800,000 - NCC West Denton Community Site** ¹⁰

Funding for a new £22.3 million community sport and wellbeing hub in West Denton. The new facility will include a swimming pool, health and wellbeing centre, and indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

- **Newcastle Upon Tyne - £20,000,000 - Grainger Market and Old Eldon Square and Blakett Street** ¹¹

All three project areas are in Newcastle's city centre and will enhance visitor experience. £7 million of the fund is to be spent on the restoration of Grainger Market, £10.4 million between transforming Old Eldon Square into a multi-functional civic space with several eateries and pedestrianizing Blakett Street to New Bridge Street, including a rain garden. Together, these projects are designed to boost the city's attraction for international events. The remainder of the fund will be spent on improving the city's digital infrastructure and extending the low-carbon heat network.

- **Stockton-on-Tees - £20,000,000 – Stockton South Town Centre Regeneration** ¹²

The bid centres around creating a large-scale exhibition centre in Preston Park. The park will gain a new coffee shop, improved parking, and new public restrooms in addition to the centre. The plan also includes upgrades in the town of Yarm, including new public toilets, town hall refurbishment and investment in local cycle routes.

- **Sunderland – £20,000,000 – Housing Eco-System** ¹³

The proposal consists of two parts, with £9 million going toward building Sunderland's Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy (HICSA). The academy's mission is to train locals to design innovative factory-built homes that will be put together at Riverside Sunderland. Locals will be educated about modernising homes, utilising low-carbon and smart technologies, and using current construction techniques to put Sunderland at the forefront of net zero objectives. The remaining £11 million will assist in the development of sustainable communities in Sunnyside and Riverside Sunderland.

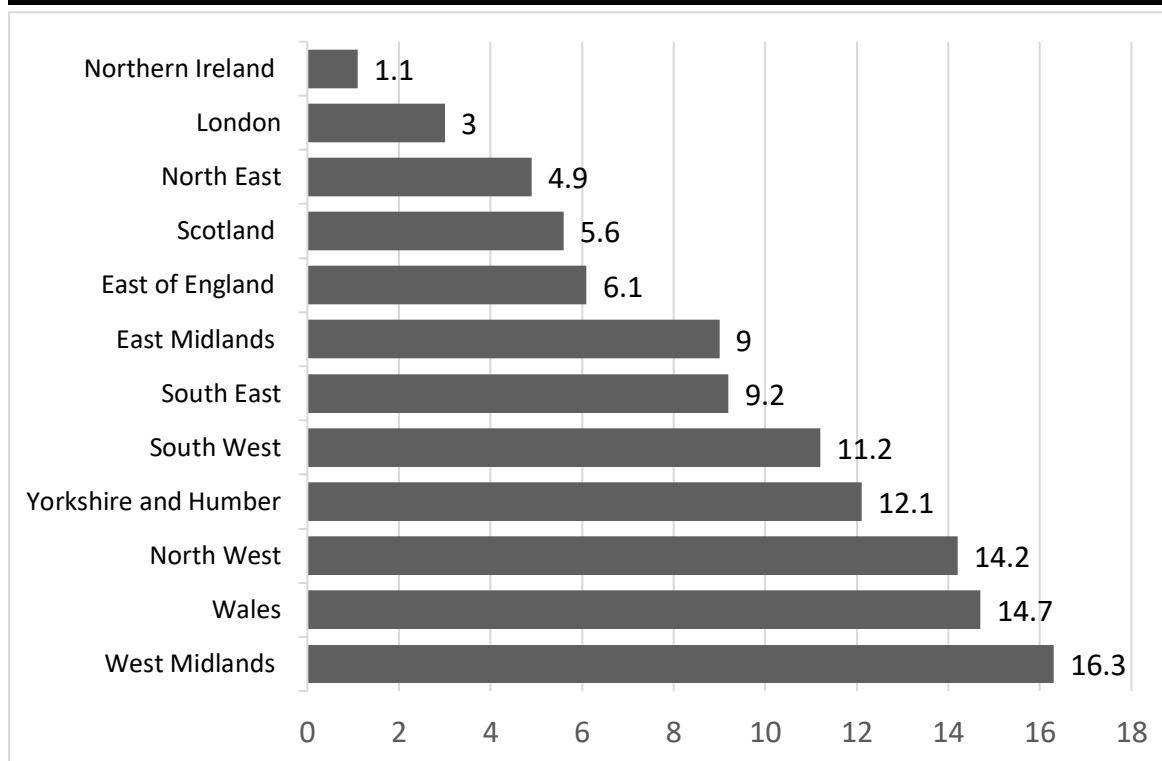
2.7 How Much Round 1 Money Has Been Received?

Through Freedom of Information requests, Local government researcher Jack Shaw discovered that less than 3% of Round 1 allocations had been received in its first year, with the North-East receiving only £4.9 million, or £1.83 per person.¹⁴ (see Figure 2.3) It signals the latest criticism of LUP Round 1 allocations, particularly considering Rishi Sunak's 2022 comments on diverting money away from deprived urban areas¹⁵ and the lack of clarity it promotes. Espousing levelling up rhetoric while simultaneously diverting money away from those areas most in need hardly seems to add up. Many of the LUP Round 1 allocations are

capital projects, but what is needed is more long-term funding. It is anticipated that UKSPF allocations will allow revenue funding.

Figure 2.3 – Levelling Up Fund Money Delivered in 2021-22, £ Million

Source: Data from Jack Shaw, FOI Disclosure from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities



2.8 What did the LUF Round 1 reveal?

The successful Round 1 bids in the region reveal an issue with the levelling up fund's eligibility requirements. Even though many challenges affecting communities have long-standing societal underpinnings, the fund required local authorities to submit proposals focused solely on physical infrastructure projects; projects that can be used as evidence of levelling up.

The fund's methodology has also drawn criticism since it was published. The Financial Times reported last year that the fund's bias toward Conservative seats is "pretty blatant" ¹⁶, with successful bids, including one in Bedfordshire supported by then Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries, despite this constituency being ranked 503rd out of 533 in the 2019 multiple deprivation index (the least deprived area is ranked 533). Research from the Centre for Inequality and Levelling Up found that 61 of England's 100 most deprived districts did not receive any funds. The Guardian commented at the time- "This is the flagship fund for levelling up, and some of the most deprived areas, including Blackpool, have not yet received any funds. It does raise questions about how the money was allocated." ¹⁷

The Round 1 competitive bidding process lacked transparency, with many local authorities receiving no explanation as to why a particular proposal was accepted or rejected. A DLUHC spokesperson said: “Funding awards are made using a fair, robust and transparent methodology to ensure we reach places most in need and a number of funds mentioned have further rounds to come.”¹⁸ The extent to which funding is allocated fairly, robust, and transparently is controversial as the department should be willing to publish more detailed reasoning on the outcome of bids, explaining successful and unsuccessful applications.

In the case of a successful bid, the sum awarded is frequently insufficient and needs to be matched with other funds to address the socioeconomic needs of the area. Local authorities are developing long-term investment plans to remedy this deficiency. Many local issues are often the legacy resulting from de-industrialisation and span multiple decades. When combined with short timeframes, for example, the timescale for spending Round 2 LUF is 31 March 2025, or 2025-26 for larger schemes in exceptional circumstances. It is naïve to think that with insufficient funding that projects can begin to address deep-rooted societal issues or the North-South divide.

The successful first-round bids also failed to show any regard for multiple deprivations (as defined by the IMD 2019), so funds are ring-fenced and do not allow local areas to deal with joint health, housing, early years, child poverty levels and other issues facing ‘left behind’ regions. Top-down policies must be based on needs identified by the IMD in deprived areas. Central government should not be responsible for identifying and prioritising issues if they lack data and evidence about local needs and base their decisions solely on anecdotal evidence. Local mayors and local authority leaders and councils need more input in decision-making.

2.9 Levelling Up Fund Round 2

For Round 2 proposals, local authorities in the region have had to focus heavily on town centre rejuvenation and transportation & infrastructure improvements. When assessing these bids in the context of the levelling up missions, it can, in many circumstances, be challenging to make a link between economic and social issues. The divergent nature of the projects and missions can differ depending on the different capacities of local authorities as many are unable to spend time reflecting on the nature of bids or draw on capabilities to create a new bid. Instead, they are forced to repackage existing or historical projects. Once again, this strikes at the heart of the levelling-up issue as better-resourced local authorities have the capacity to prepare more complex and well-thought-out bids.

Details of the Round 2 bids in the region are contained in Appendix 1 in the report. The decisions on Round 2 will be made before the end of the year but outcomes may well not come through until after the next General Election.

3 The Levelling Up White Paper

Published in February 2022, the levelling-up white paper outlined twelve levelling-up missions to tackle regional inequality. It should be noted that regional inequalities cannot be attributed to a single administration or party; these are inequalities that have been unsuccessfully tackled for many decades. As the latest in a lengthy line of Government attempts to narrow regional inequality, the white paper repackaged the now-defunct Industrial Strategy missions.¹⁹

In recent years, several studies have highlighted how the UK has higher levels of regional inequality than other OECD countries. Inequalities span multiple economic and social dimensions; the Bennett Institute reported in 2019 that “towns in the North-East are doing much worse than other parts of Britain, and this is apparent in their economic outcomes, rates of growth and levels of public service provision.”²⁰ The missions set out in the white paper are targeted at narrowing such inequality. The following section discusses each mission and, in the absence of detailed and formal evaluations, presents available data and information to assess each mission’s progress.

3.1 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.” (Department Responsible: HMT)

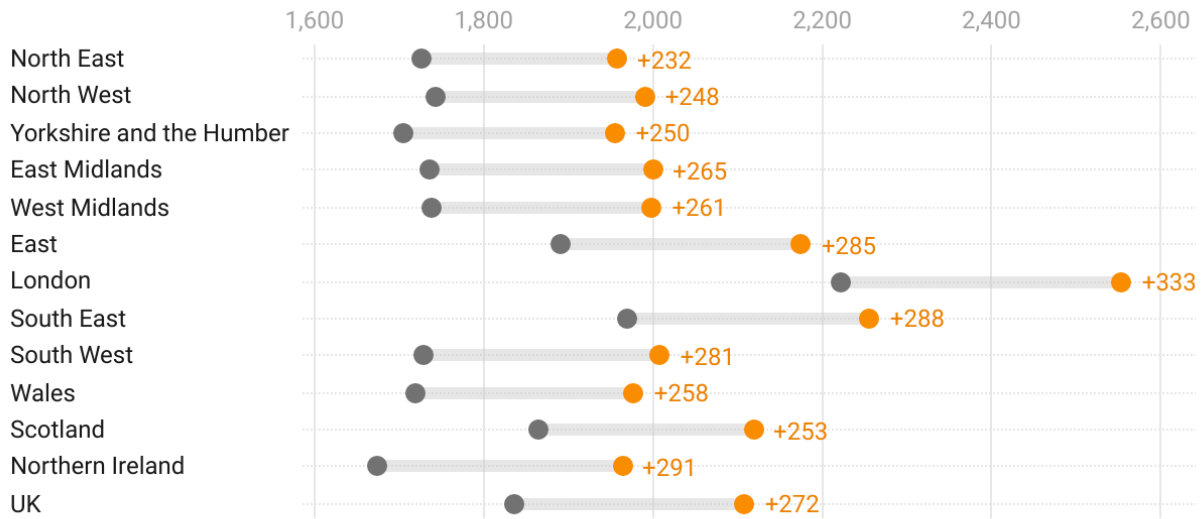
3.1.1 Pay

Once a booming economic core of the United Kingdom, the North-East led the world in coal, steel, and shipbuilding industries in the 19th Century. Forward to the present day, the region's large industrial base has disappeared, accelerated by globalisation and the pursuit of the neoliberal economic model. While the industries in the North-East were experiencing decline, economic capital flowed to London and the South-East during the late 19th and 20th centuries; the result was a country more regionally divided than any comparable advanced economy. Many in the region are left reliant on public sector jobs. As of June 2022, 21.1% of people in the region were employed in the public sector, compared to 17.1% for the UK as a whole, and 14.4% in London.²¹

The white paper’s first mission contains a commitment to narrowing the gap in income inequality. When considering income inequality, the median is the preferential method of assessing average earnings as a small number of high earners does not distort it. It is defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as “the value below which 50% of jobs fall”. At the time of the 2019 General Election, (as Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show) the North-East stood as the *NUTS 1 region* with the third lowest monthly pay behind Yorkshire and the Humber and Northern Ireland. In July 2022, the region took the second bottom spot with a monthly wage of £1957, an increase of £232 (13%). In the same period, the UK saw an increase of £272 (15%) and London £333 (15%). Interregional

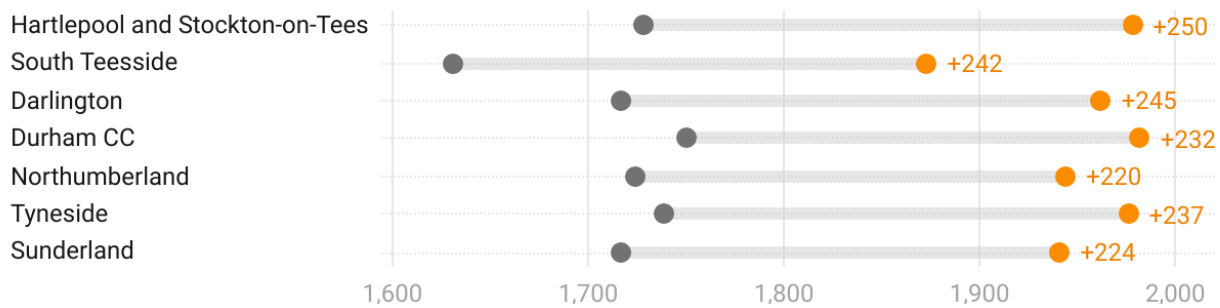
inequality is another issue in the area; South Teesside’s monthly median income is £109 less than County Durham’s.

Figure 3.1 – Monthly Median Pay by NUTS 1 Region, Dec 19 – Jul 22, £
 Source: ONS: Earnings & Employment from Pay as You Earn Real Time Information, Seasonally Adjusted.



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.2 – Monthly Median Pay by NUTS 3 Region, Dec 19 – Jul 22, £
 Source: ONS: Earnings & Employment from Pay as You Earn Real Time Information, Seasonally Adjusted.



Created with Datawrapper

3.1.2 Employment

The commitment to increasing employment in the North-East, a region long plagued by employment issues, was welcomed. Nomis, a service provided by the ONS, provides data on the labour market. Measured by the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the number of people in employment consists of those over 16 years who completed one hour or more of paid work per week, including those who are temporarily away from their jobs, such as on holiday or sick leave. Employees and the self-employed makeup over 99% of those in this category. The North-East sees employment levels fall well below average UK levels. Although the gap with the rest of the UK has narrowed since 2019, the North-East's employment rate is still below the UK average, as Table 3.1 shows. Unemployment in the region stands at 5.1% compared to 3.8% in the UK, as a whole.

Table 3.1 - % of People Economically Active

		North East	United Kingdom
Economically Active	April 2019 – June 2019	75	79.3
	April 2022 – June 2022	75.1	78.6
In Employment	April 2019 – June 2019	70.8	76.1
	April 2019 – June 2022	71.4	75.5
Unemployment	April 2019 – June 2022	5.3	3.9
	April 2019 – June 2022	5.1	3.8

Source: Nomis: Economically Active Time Series

In addition to increasing employment levels, ensuring the region is an attractive place for skilled workers to live is crucial for any attempt at levelling up. The area suffers from what has come to be known as the ‘brain drain,’ with many skilled workers forced to find employment elsewhere. Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that graduates are 10% more likely to move away from the area where they grew up in comparison to non-graduates, with popular destinations including London, Bristol, and Brighton.²² The North and coastal areas suffer the most significant losses. In the report, the IFS said, “In moving from more deprived areas to London and other cities, graduates improve their own career prospects, but this exacerbates geographical inequality in skills. As well as ‘levelling up’ educational attainment across the country, policymakers should think about how to attract and retain talent in places that are currently less well-off.”²³

3.1.3 Productivity

The White Paper annex identifies Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour on an ITL1 Level as the metric of choice for productivity. The latest data from the ONS ranks the North-East as the English region with the second lowest GVA added per hour (see Table 3.2), only behind Yorkshire and the Humber. On a per-hour basis, the GVA of the North-East fell £5.82 below the average for England.

Table 3.2 – GVA Per Hour Worked, 2019 – 2020, £

Region	2019	2020
London	49.63	50.70
South East	40.12	41.04
England	37.51	38.29
UK	36.95	37.73
Scotland	36.06	36.87
East of England	34.53	35.18
North West	33.31	33.95
South West	33.15	33.72
West Midlands	32.45	33.07
East Midlands	31.80	32.58
North East	31.73	32.47
Yorkshire & Humber	31.36	32.04
Wales	31.07	31.80
Northern Ireland	30.56	31.22

Source: ONS: Subregional Productivity

**3.2 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.”
(Department Responsible: BEIS)**

Table 3.3 outlines the chosen metrics, which include government R&D funding and Business enterprise expenditure on R&D (BERD). For both measures the North-East has the lowest expenditure and clearly this requires much greater discussion within the Universities, local authorities, Health Trusts and major companies in the region. The North-East component of regional R&D expenditure is extremely low.

Table 3.3 – Regional R&D Expenditure, 2019, £ million

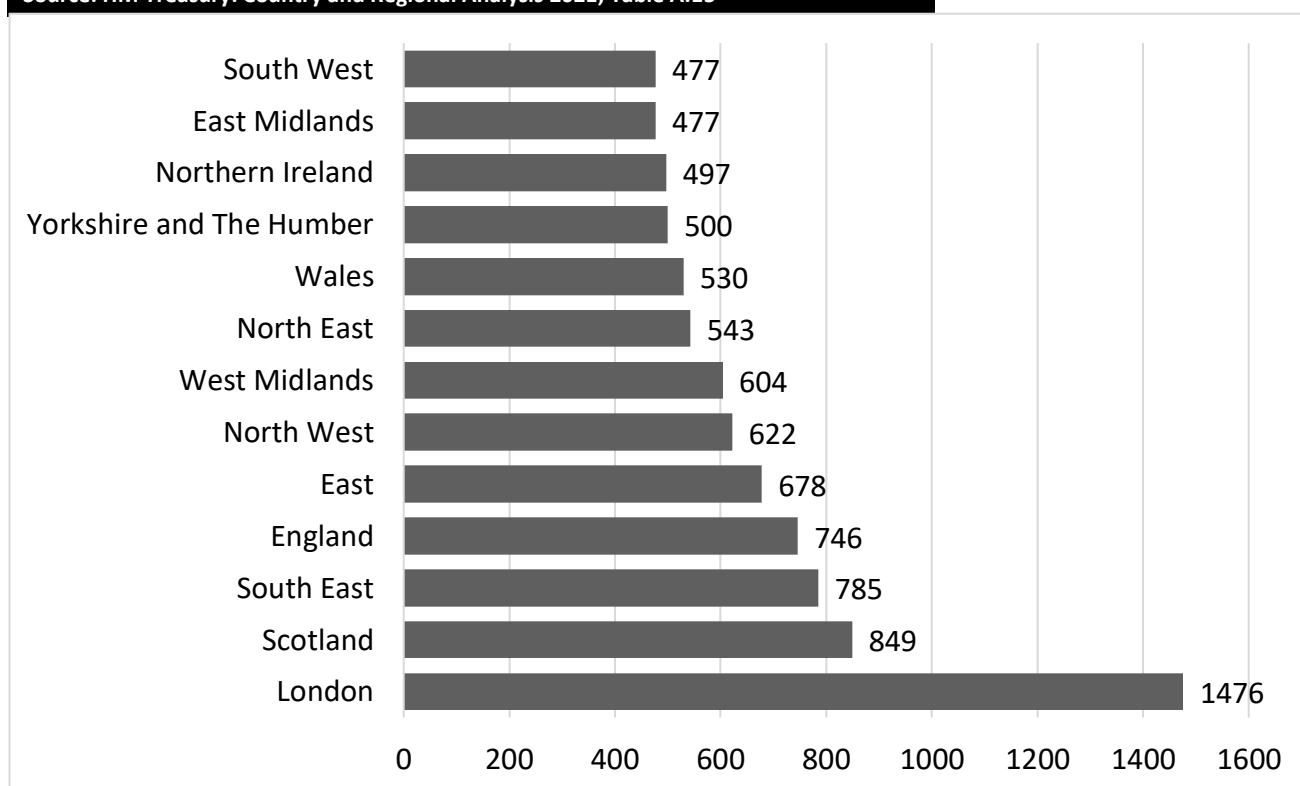
	Government & UKRI	Business
North East	50	411
North West	177	2,051
Yorkshire & Humber	130	1,012
East Midlands	90	1,922
West Midlands	76	2,357
East of England	304	5,384
London	591	3,198
South East	740	5,326
South West	272	1,835

Source: ONS: Gross Expenditure on Research and Development by Region, UK

3.3 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.” (Department Responsible: DfT)

Figure 3.3 – Transport Expenditure, 2021-21, £ Per Head

Source: HM Treasury: Country and Regional Analysis 2021, Table A.15



A report by thinktank Onward stated in October 2021 that Britain’s largest cities, including Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, have suboptimal public transport networks undermining productivity and growth potential. The report states, “these findings demonstrate that the Government should ruthlessly target transport investment towards the intra-city networks of regional cities – especially Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Birmingham - and boosting public transport links to towns.”²⁴

The need to improve public transport investment and connectivity which currently favours London and the South East include initiatives for simpler fares, integrated ticketing, and improved services. On a per-head basis, London tops the charts spending £933 more per head than the North-East (see figure 3.3).

Nexus, the passenger Transport Authority announced in June 2022 that it required more than £30 million in financing to maintain overall services.²⁵ Nexus was only given £23.8 million in government funding, significantly less than the £57 million required to finish upgrades between 2023 and 2025. The region will also be affected by the decision to scrap the Leeds leg of HS2. While HS2 was never planned to run directly through the North-East, a new link to London would have eased the pressure on the current outdated East Coast Main Line. A report by Volterra Partners in June 2020 predicted that the Eastern leg of HS2 would boost the economies of the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the North-East by £4.2 billion, the equivalent of a 1.5% rise in overall economic productivity²⁶, but the latter region has had little investment in its transport infrastructure. The choice to retreat from the arrangement to transform Northern Rail Services is symbolic of their commitment to levelling up.

Across the region, the North-East Transport Plan 2021-2035 identified in recent years, rising levels of car use and ownership²⁷, with the Department for Transport reporting 75% of workers in the North East commuting to work by car in 2020.²⁸ The plan identifies the daily commuting cost to be £5.12 plus daily parking charges, with commuters travelling an average of 8.4 miles or 25 minutes. High reliance on private transportation during the cost-of-living crisis will inevitably impact those on a low income, particularly with the rising fuel costs. While motorists saw a record petrol price drop in August 2022, the RAC reports that current prices are still far from a fair price.²⁹ Inevitably, those with no choice but to use a private vehicle to commute, often due to poor public transport connectivity, have their pockets squeezed the most

3.4 “Mission 4: By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.” (Department Responsible: DCMS)

As we start to look toward recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on movement and technology transformed the traditional workplace away from offices and into homes across the nation. Quickly it became clear that many preferred such a working lifestyle, data from the ONS showing that in February 2022, 84% of those who worked from home during the pandemic would continue.³⁰ The pandemic practices have created a new dimension in connectivity's importance to individuals and businesses. It is becoming more commonly known that improved digital connectivity

can increase economic output. The Local Government Association claim increasing broadband speeds could add £17 billion to UK output by 2024³¹, and research by the Confederation of British Industry found that digital transformation will boost the British economy by £232 billion by 2040.³²

The white paper's mission commits to nationwide gigabit-capable broadband, with a speed of at least one gigabit-per-second (1 Gbps or one thousand megabits per second, Mbps). As of January 2022, 63.5% of premises in the North-East could receive such a speed, a connectivity level higher than six other regions. Across the North-East, there are wide inter-region urban-rural disparities, particularly in the constituencies of Hexham (8.7%), Wansbeck (5.6%) and Berwick-upon-Tweed (11.4%). In comparison, several constituencies in Teesside now have extremely high capabilities. For example, Middlesbrough (91.8), Redcar (91.4%) and Stockton North (90.6%) are all now well connected primarily because of the investment by City Fibre in the region.³³ Such a disparity means the Government has a long way to go in levelling up the North-East alone. Without addressing this inter-regional and intra-regional inequity (as shown in Figures 3.4. and 3.5) cannot be accomplished.

Figure 3.4 – Gigabit-Capable Broadband by Region, %, Jan 22
Source: House of Commons Library Analysis of Ofcom Connected Nations Data

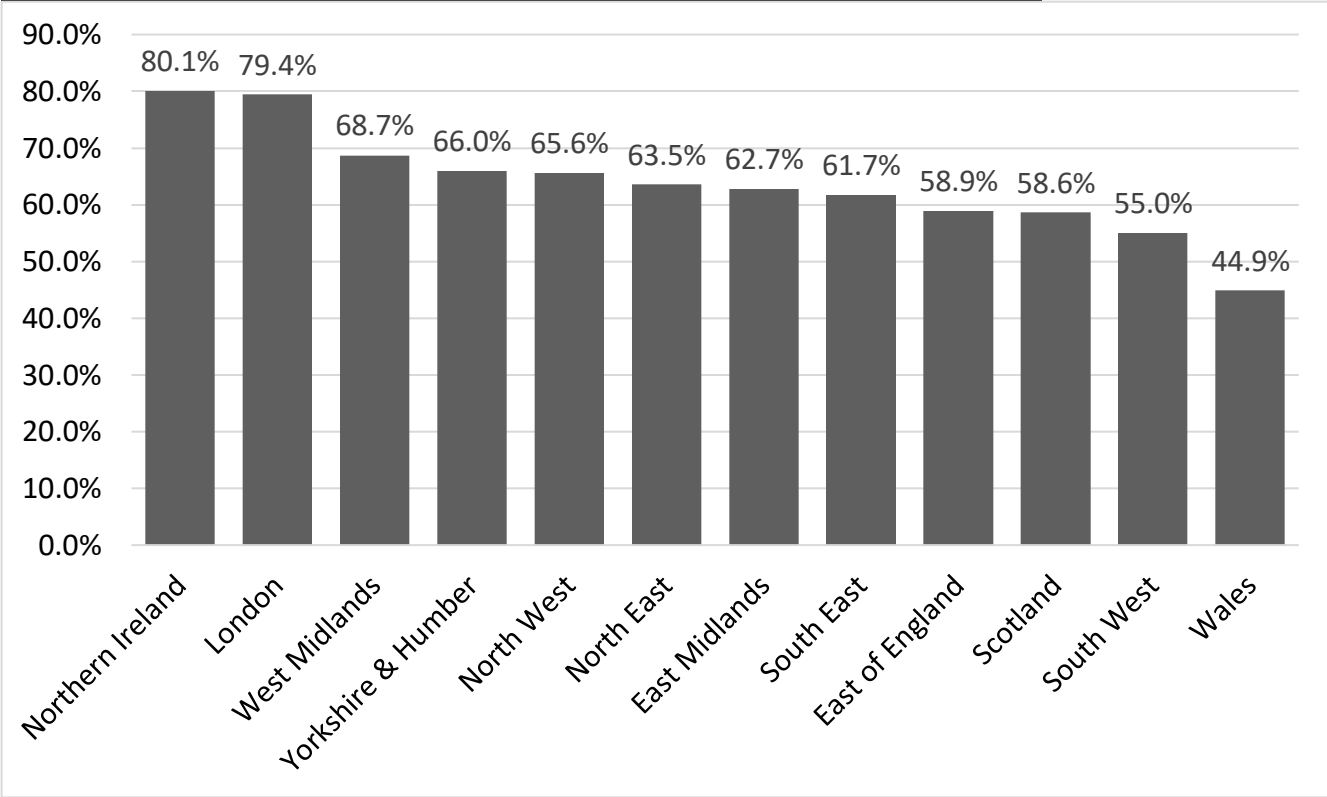
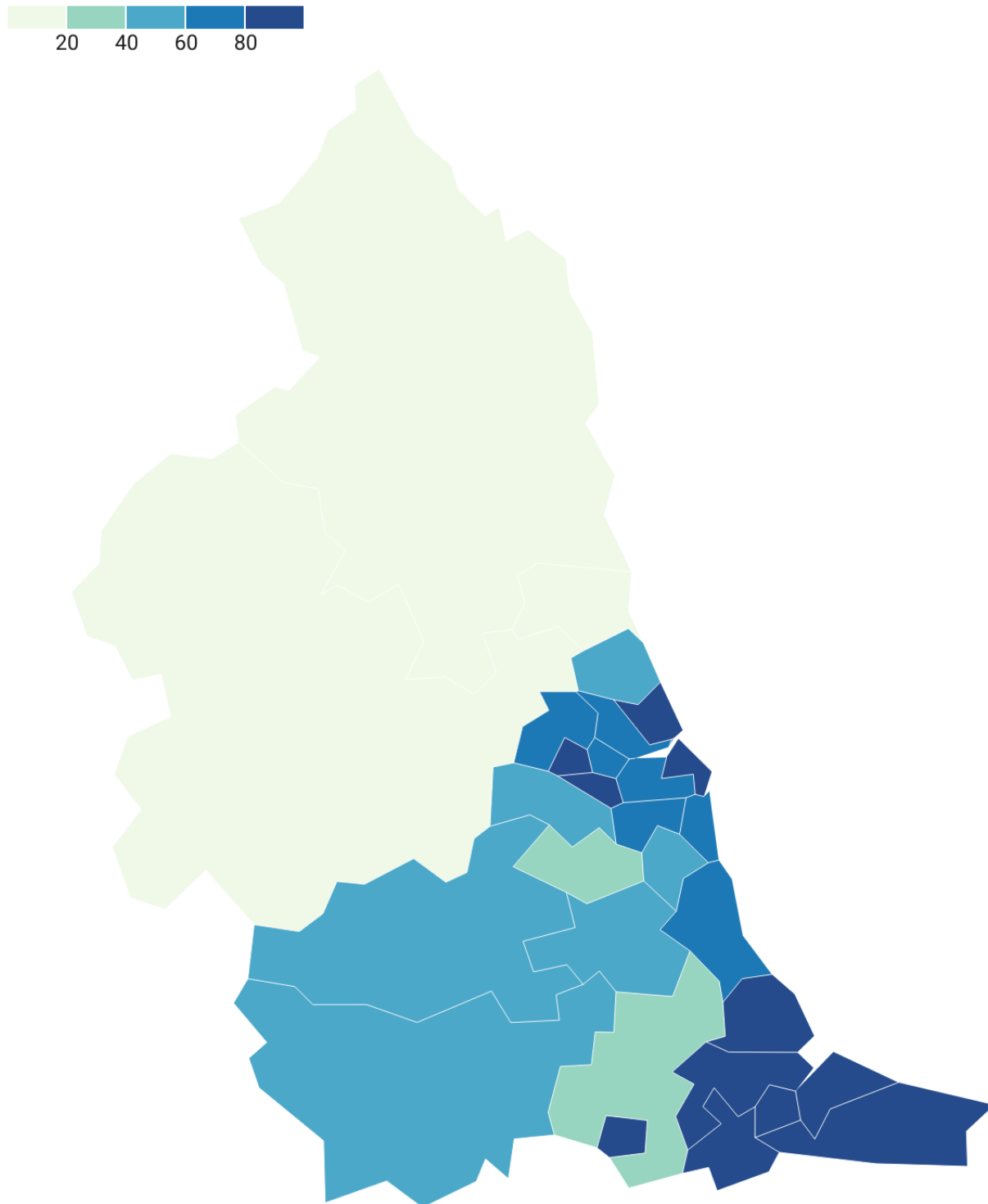


Figure 3.5 – Gigabit Capable Broadband in the North East by Parliamentary Constituency, %, Jan 22



Source: House of Commons Library Analysis of Ofcom Connected Nations Data • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2018 • Created with Datawrapper

**3.5 “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.”
(Department Responsible: DfE)**

High-quality early years education is critical to children’s educational, cognitive, behavioural, and social outcomes. Studies such as that from the Education Policy Institute demonstrate a link between early years education and the role it plays in levelling the gap between those from disadvantaged areas and other children.³⁴ The metric chosen by the Government to measure such educational attainment is the percentage of students meeting the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2. The data presented in Table 3.4 shows the percentage of students who have met this standard.³⁵ It shows that in the North-East, all but two local authorities, County Durham & Middlesbrough now have results above the average for all English schools. It demonstrates a prominent level of educational achievement and progress across the region, particularly in Teesside.

Table 3.4 - % Students in the North East Meeting the Expected Standard at the end of KS2, 2019

Rank	LA	Percentage of Pupils
1	Stockton-on-Tees	71
2	Redcar & Cleveland	70
3	Gateshead	68
4	Hartlepool	68
5	North Tyneside	67
6	Sunderland	67
7	Darlington	66
8	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	66
9	Northumberland	66
10	South Tyneside	66
11	England (State-Funded)	65
12	England (All Schools)	65
13	County Durham	65
14	Middlesbrough	64

Source: gov.uk, Find and Compare Schools in England

While initially, this may indicate favourable outcomes for children in the North-East, the latest GCSE results (as shown in Table 3.5) highlight a distinct regional divide, the percentage gap between Northumberland and Rutland in the East Midlands exceeding 15%, a concerning gap suggesting other socio-economic factors such as child poverty influence attainment.

Table 3.5 – GCSE (9 to 1) Grade Outcomes by Country in England, 2022

County	% Of Grades 7 and above
Durham	23
Northumberland	22.2
Tyne and Wear	24.8
Rutland	38.9
Buckinghamshire	35.8

Source: Ofqual

Simply stating a commitment to increasing educational achievement is a gross simplification of a multifaceted problem impacting education. Change cannot be confined to the classroom. It is essential to address the broader economic disparities that contribute to and result from educational inequality. In the North-East, educational performance is impacted by the wider societal crisis of child poverty. The North-East Child Poverty Commission reports that in 2020/21, the North-East overtook London to have the highest level of child poverty in the UK at 38%, a continuation in the trend of harshly increasing child poverty in the region, up from 26% in 2014/15.³⁶ The translation of poverty to educational attainment is evident, a report by the Education Policy Institute also found that “by the end of secondary school, a disadvantaged pupil is on average 18.1 months behind their peers in overall attainment for maths and English – almost double the gap at the end of primary school. For persistently disadvantaged pupils, the national gap is 22.7 months.”³⁷ Addressing child poverty and inequality to lower the steep social gradient in achievement remains a difficult and long-term challenge for this Government, but the danger is of policy focus on economic growth to the detriment of social and educational policy. Table 3.5 shows regional educational disparities.

Since 2010, the austerity agenda has dramatically diminished funding for children and youth services nationwide, especially in more disadvantaged communities. As of April 2010, there were 190 Sure Start childcare facilities in the region offering crucial early childhood assistance. In 2019, there were 91 children’s centres in the North-East, a 50% reduction since 2010. Some areas, like Gateshead, suffered severe losses, losing 93% of their centres.³⁸ This represents the disappearance of a crucial provider of crucial early childhood care and the consequential abandonment of children in the region.

Table 3.6 provides data on the destinations of students in state-funded mainstream schools and colleges in 2019/20. It shows the number of 16 to 18-year-olds in sustained education, apprenticeships, or work is 77.7% in the North-East, the lowest rate in England, according to the most recent government data, with 17.7% of this age group's destinations not being reported as sustainable. However, at 12.2%, the region has the highest proportion of students enrolled in apprenticeships, indicating a preference for destinations likely to gain some income. Ensuring all those who wish to complete higher education in the region can do so and are not constrained by their family's financial status is critical to levelling up. So far, the Government has made little progress on this.

Table 3.6 – 16-18 Regional Destinations, State-Funded Mainstream Schools & Colleges, 2019/20, %

	Sustained Education	Sustained Apprenticeships	Sustained Employment	Not Recorded as A Sustained Destination	Activity not captured
East Midlands	47	10	25	13	5
East of England	44	8	29	13	5
Inner London	60	3	16	14	8
London	60	4	17	13	7
North East	46	12	20	18	5
North West	48	10	23	14	5
Outer London	60	5	17	12	7
South East	44	7	31	13	6
South West	39	10	32	14	5
West Midlands	48	9	23	15	5
Yorkshire & Humber	46	10	23	15	5

Source: Department for Education, 16-18 Destination Measures

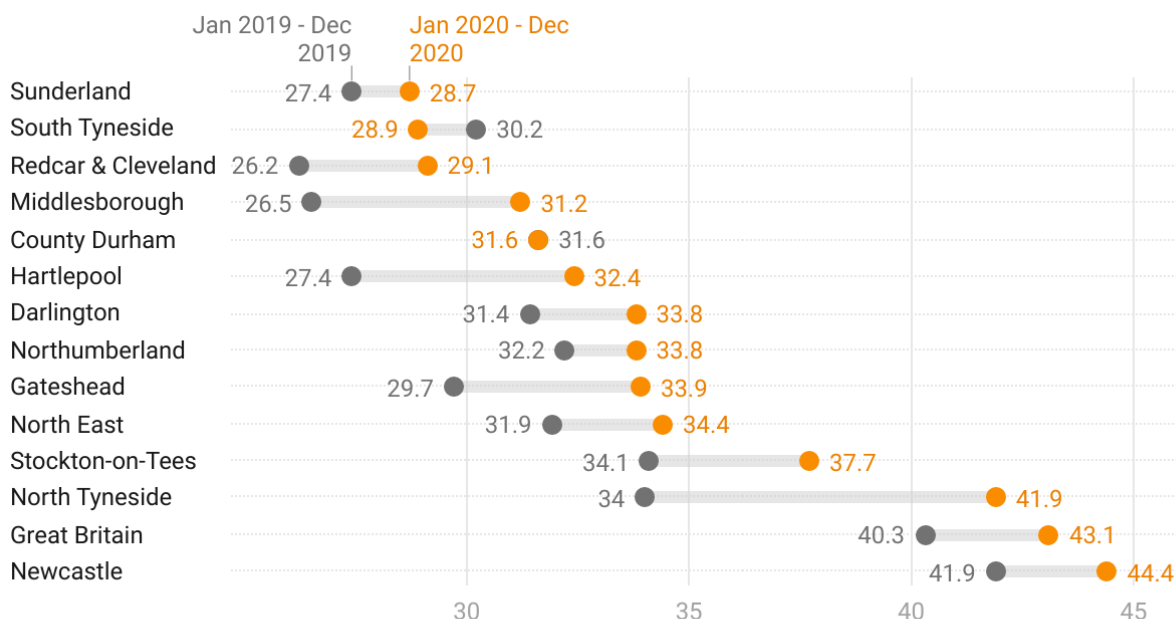
3.6 “Mission 6: By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing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

The white paper emphasised the necessity of raising qualification standards in awareness of their significance for community mobility. Inevitably, different regions demand different skills, but the possibility of increasing positive outcomes such as higher wages remain constant. The metric to measure such a mission is the percentage of the population with a level 3+ NVQ Level 4 qualification attainment in the region compared to Great Britain as a whole (see Figure 3.6).

Overall, 43% of the population in Great Britain hold a qualification at level 4 or above, qualifications higher than A-Level. The North-East region falls well below the average in Great Britain, with only 34.4% of the population having such qualifications. The spread of qualifications also varies significantly across the region on a local authority basis. Sunderland has the lowest percentage at 28.7%, whereas Newcastle-Upon-Tyne exceeds the British average by 1.3%. Since the beginning of levelling up, South Tyneside has also seen a decrease in the percentage of qualifications, which fell from 30.2% to 28.9

Figure 3.6 – Qualification NVQ4 and Above, % of Population Aged 16-64, Jan 2019 – Dec 2019 and Jan 2021 – Dec 2021

Source: ONS: Local Authority Profile, Qualifications NVQ4 and Above



Created with Datawrapper

3.7 “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.” (Department Responsible: DHSC)

The Marmot Review published in 2010 provided an analysis of health inequalities in England concluding that “the lower people are in the hierarchy and the more deprived, the greater the threat to health.”³⁹ Assessing the progress made since 2019 is difficult as the latest figures only cover between 2018-2020, however, what is clear is that existing regional health inequalities are increasing. A Manchester commissioned Marmot report published in 2021 identified that Greater Manchester has suffered from a “jaw dropping fall in life expectancy and widening social and health inequalities across the region over the past year”⁴⁰. A finding that could be generalised to other regions like the North- East.

The chosen metric from the white paper is Healthy life expectancy, the average number of years an individual is expected to live in a state of self-assessed good or particularly good health. Using healthy life expectancy instead of average life expectancy adds an extra quality of life dimension. This extra dimension can be seen in the relationship between the proportion of LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas) in the most deprived 10% nationally. The two LAs with the two lowest male healthy life expectancies are Blackpool (53.49) and Kingston Upon Hull (53.84). These two LAs ranking 6th and

4th for the proportion of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally. On the other hand, Rutland has a healthy life expectancy of 74.65 and contains no LSOAs in the most deprived 10%. The same can be said for Wokingham, with a healthy life expectancy of 70.94.

As Table 3.7 shows in the North-East, all local authorities fall below the overall male and female healthy life expectancy. The region’s male expectancy varies by 5.5 years and females by 5.1 years. All local authorities also fall in the top one hundred in terms of their rank of the number of LSOA, small areas utilised for reporting statistics, in the most 10% deprived areas nationally. In Middlesbrough, half of the 86 LSOAs are in the most deprived 10%, the town also seeing male healthy life expectancy just over 15 years lower than Rutland. This disparity in healthy life expectancy represents an extreme level of inequality. Such concerns reach deep into the core of government policy and go far beyond the NHS and Public Health England. The concluding sentence in the Marmot Review 10 years on perhaps best captures this:

- “In effect, this report is calling for a reordering of national priorities. Making wellbeing rather than straightforward economic performance the central goal of policy will create a better society with better health and greater health equity.”⁴¹

Narrowing the health and well-being inequalities remain central to levelling up. Ensuring suitable metrics that can track the outcomes associated with improving social infrastructure is critical to narrowing such disparities. As recent work from FUSE⁴² and the Northern Health Alliance⁴³ shows.

Table 3.7 – Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth, 2018-20 and Associated Level of Deprivation

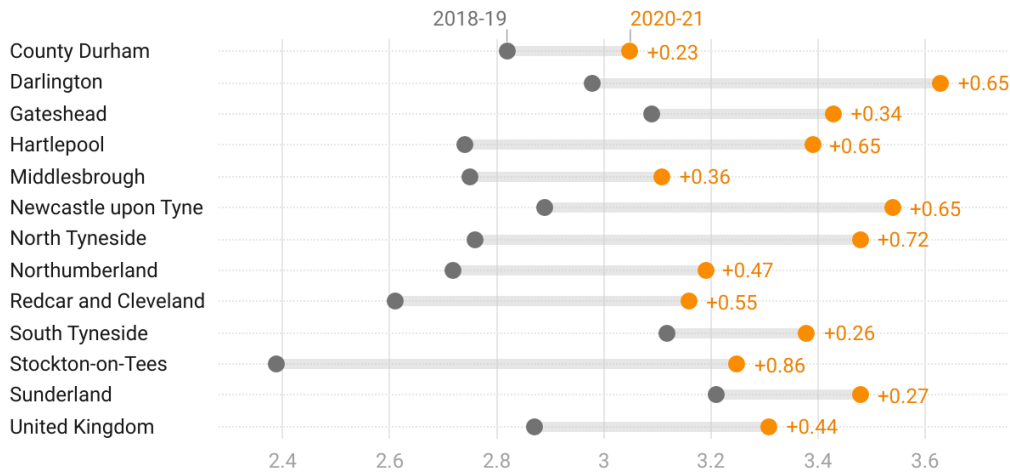
	Male	Female	IMD – Rank of Average Rank
United Kingdom	62.8	63.6	
North Tyneside	61.6	57.2	128
Northumberland	61.5	62.3	131
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	60.8	60.7	74
Stockton-on-Tees	60.1	61.5	113
Darlington	59.5	60.6	103
Middlesbrough	58.8	60.6	16
County Durham	58.8	59.9	65
Gateshead	57.9	58.5	54
Hartlepool	57.6	58.8	25
South Tyneside	57.3	58.9	26
Redcar & Cleveland	56.9	58.5	62
Sunderland	56.1	56.9	33

Source: ONS: Mapping Income Deprivation at a Local Authority Level & Health State Life Expectancies, UK: 2018-2020

3.8 “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.” (Department Responsible: DLUHC)

Figure 3.7 – Anxiety in the North East, 2018-19 to 2020-21
 Source: ONS: Personal Well-Being Estimates by Local Authority

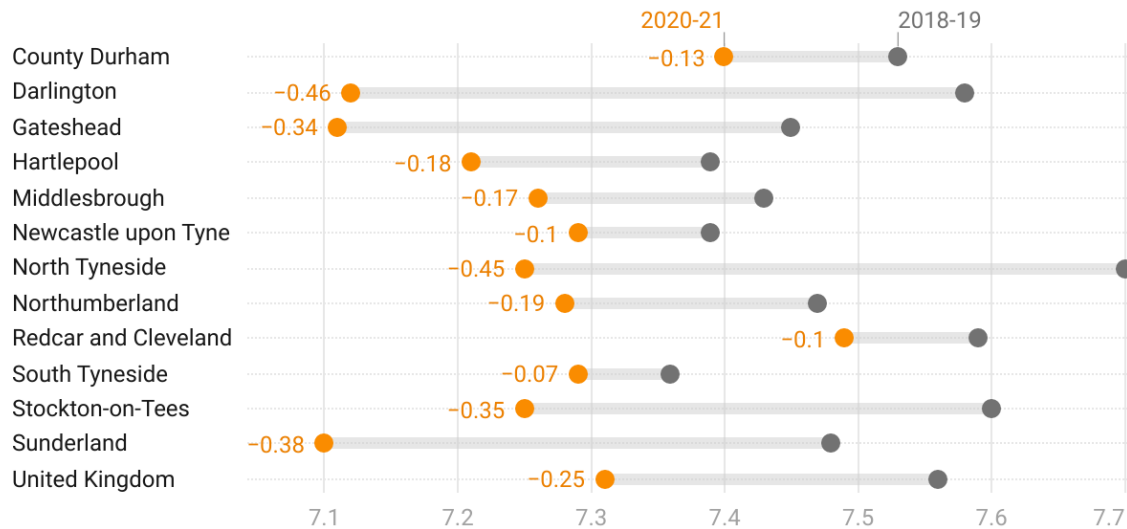
On a scale where 0 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”, overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.8 – Happiness in the North East, 2018-19 to 2020-21
 Source: ONS: Personal Well-Being Estimates by Local Authority

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

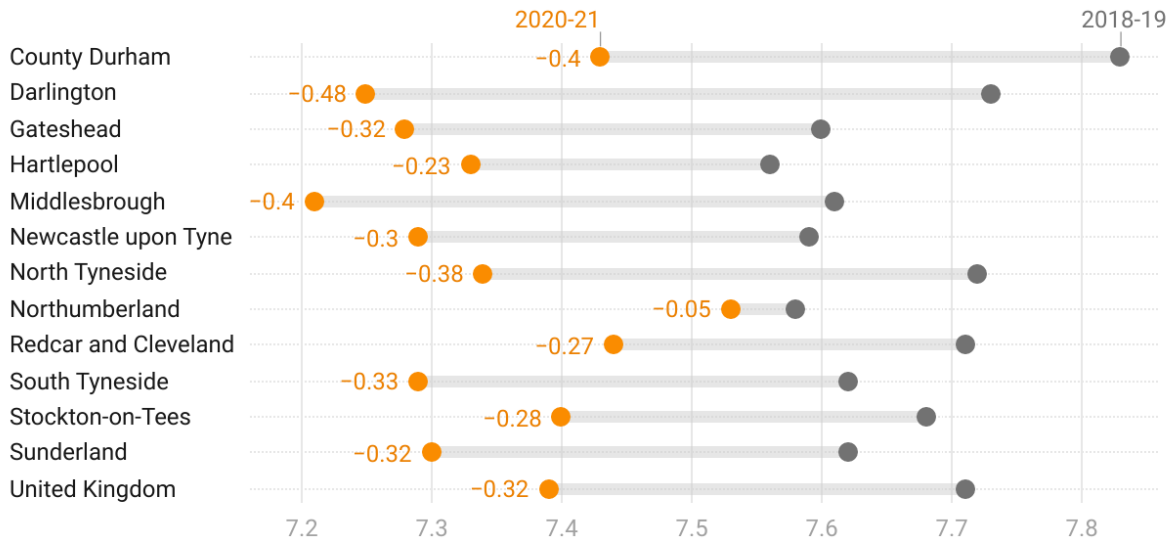


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Figure 3.9 – Life Satisfaction in the North East, 2018-19 to 2020-21

Source: ONS: Personal Well-Being Estimates by Local Authority

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

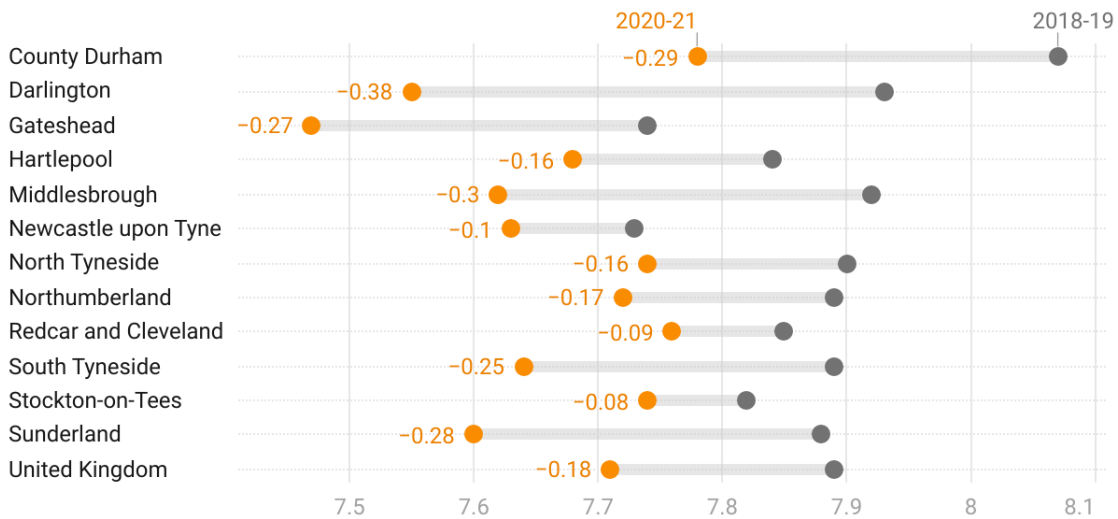


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Figure 3.10 – Is life worthwhile in the North East, 2018-19 to 2020-21

Source: ONS: Personal Well-Being Estimates by Local Authority

Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

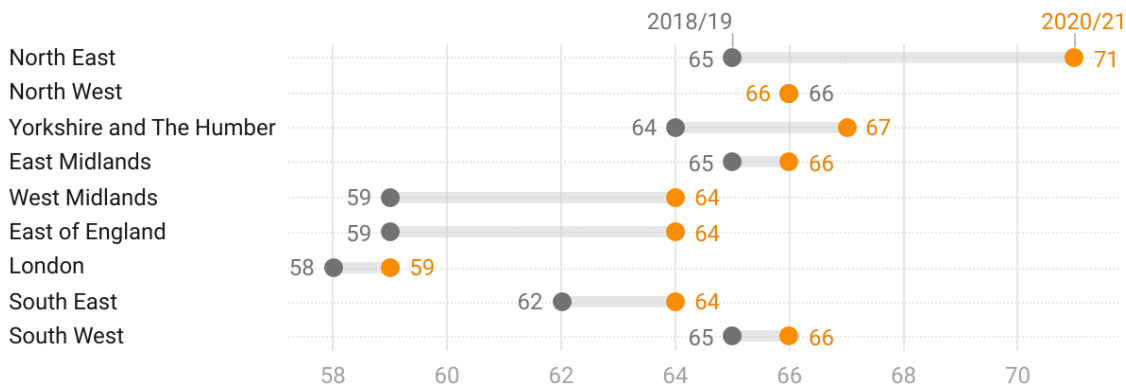


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The ONS tracks well-being using four metrics; anxiety, happiness, life satisfaction and if we think life is worthwhile; below each table title are the questions asked to participants. Figures 3.7,3.8.3.9.3.10 show, across the North-East, all metrics apart from anxiety have decreased. However, growing anxious feelings should also be treated as negative progress. The improvement in the region follows the trend of the UK. The Government intends to measure progress on a Local Authority level. As a region, the North-East has average levels of anxiety and slightly below-average levels of happiness, life satisfaction and feeling that life is worthwhile. Despite falling behind in many areas, its residents have a positive outlook on life. The mission is ambiguous with little well-being data that is currently accessible. Further research is necessary for this behavioural exploratory model, and the government must establish quantifiable, credible goals.

3.9 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.” (Department Responsible: DLUHC)

Figure 3.11 - % of Adults Who Feel They Very or Fairly Strongly Belong to Their Immediate Neighbourhood, 20/21
 Source: ONS: Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport: Community Life Survey



Created with Datawrapper

The white paper’s inclusion of pride in place demonstrated a dedication to creating more robust and cohesive communities. However, the measurements used to gauge this pride have not yet advanced to the point where analysis is possible. The nearest equivalent is the Community Life Survey (see Figure 3.11), which is conducted by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and measures a ‘feeling of belonging.’ According to the survey, 71% of adults in the region felt strongly connected to their immediate neighbourhood, compared to 59% in London. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the North-East has experienced an increase of 6% from 2018–19; this may be tied to the region’s response to COVID–19, but it complicates the white papers’ presumptive narrative and association between economic success and pride.

The subject has also become the topic of study for Cambridge University’s Bennett Institute for Public Policy, arguing that policymakers need to understand the issues associated with measuring such an

abstract concept. They recommend that the DCMS introduce new questions about pride in the Community Life Survey and Taking Part Survey.⁴⁴ As the institute states, “helping individuals and communities in the face of ever-worsening circumstances by understanding how their current sense of place, as well as the strong roots and narratives of how places have weathered similar problems in the past, is perhaps going to emerge as one of the most important elements of the government’s plans to level up the country.”⁴⁵

3.10 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.” (Department Responsible: DLUHC)

Excellent quality housing is more than having a place to live. It impacts our own personal well-being and the lives of those raised in and around our homes while contributing to wider society. However, despite the issue of housing being one of the commonly seen priorities, around 18% of the population identifies poor availability and quality of housing stock as the most critical issue Britain faces today, successive Governments have failed to remedy this deficiency.

As the White Paper annex notes the Government intends to use regional figures on the number of first-time buyers, however, also notes that there are no current official Government statistics providing such data. This Naturally creates a difficulty when measuring levelling up progress. Ensuring that the new ‘public metric for annual first-time buyer numbers at the sub-national level’ needs to be a central government priority.

The English Housing Survey provides data on the proportion of people living in non-decent homes by region; however, it does not provide a regional breakdown of the data by ownership. As Table 3.8 shows the North- East sees a comparatively low level of non-decent homes, scoring 6% less than Yorkshire and the Humber. Such a low score of non-decent homes in the region is encouraging as access to a healthy home environment is critical to health and wellbeing. As the Health Foundation summarises, a healthy home is affordable, offers a stable and secure base, provides for all the household needs, tenants feel safe and comfortable, and the property is connected to the community, work, and services.⁴⁶

Table 3.8 – Proportion of Occupied Non-Decent Homes, by Region, %

	2010-11	2020-21
Yorkshire & Humber	24.9	20.5
South West	31	19.4
East Midlands	26.9	18.5
North West	27.2	17
West Midlands	28.3	15.3
All Dwellings	25.9	15
North East	14.7	13.4
East of England	26.1	13.4
London	25.3	12
South East	24.2	9.5

Source: English Housing Survey, Dwelling Sample

3.11 Mission 11: “By 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.” (Department Responsible: HO)

The headline figures the government chose to measure relates to homicides, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime. The Home Office states neighbourhood crime to include robbery, theft from the person, burglary, and vehicle crime. The Levelling Up White Paper says, “crime erodes social capital, deters investment and job creation, entrenches poverty and undermines prospects for young people,” suggesting that the social causes relating to crime will be addressed. These could be linked to wider issues like poverty that can also be addressed by other mission foci. As Liddle et al. acknowledge in a broader context, the long-term goals are consistent with the Police Foundation’s independent study of the future of police in England and Wales, published in March 2022.⁴⁷

Overall, the mission can be seen to lack ambition. All that is needed for a successful mission is for crime to decrease. Based on such a target, all areas apart from the North-West could be seen to have been successful in some way. The North-East, as Table 3.9 shows, has seen a decrease in all metrics bar homicide, which has increased by only 2 between March 2020-2022. Specific commitments to tackle certain types of crime in the region, namely homicide and robbery, may prove effective in continuing to reduce crime.

Table 3.9 – Regional Change in Homicide and Serious Violence Offences, March 2020 – March 2022

	Robbery	Residential Burglary	Vehicle Offences	Theft from Person	Homicide
North East	-12	-2,016	-3,395	-934	2
North West	5,126	12,665	19,934	5,301	34
Yorkshire & Humber	-1,008	-11,375	-12,563	-2,113	11
East Midlands	-964	-6,598	-11,003	-1,338	12
West Midlands	-524	-6,391	-3,278	138	13
East of England	-1,311	-8,534	-10,508	-1,264	-25
London	-15,606	-16,560	-25,057	-6,967	-20
South East	-2,086	-11,680	-17,635	-1,725	-13
South West	-476	-3,433	-6,167	-1,111	22
Wales	-149	-2,650	-3,769	-474	-6

Source: ONS: Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Data Tables

3.12 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.” (Department Responsible: DLUHC)

In 2022, the government has completed devolution deals for York and North Yorkshire, and the East Midlands worth £540 million and £1.14 billion, respectively, over the next 30 years. As promised, these areas have been rewarded for taking on the mayoral model.

In the North-East, negotiations to create a new enlarged combined authority in 2024 covering Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Gateshead, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Durham have been long in talks. Local media reports talks are on the verge of completion, with a devolution package to include over £3 billion in funding over 30 years. Progress towards a finalised deal is likely to continue now under the new Truss Conservative administration. County Durham, which has been pursuing its own single-county devolution deal, could be notable for its absence from any new agreement. Local leaders are finding it difficult to agree to the revised devolution package, with Northumberland perhaps now joining Durham’s cautionary approach. In a 2022 attempt to include the Counties, a letter sent by former levelling-up secretary Greg Clark on September 1st gives Durham the possibility of inclusion in the deal until mid-October allowing for the possibility of a complete regional alliance and agreement. The North-East devolution deals may fail as separate County deals may be preferred to one enlarged Combined authority. Failure to agree could hold the region back for decades in terms of local governance and devolution.

4 Conclusions

Despite Levelling Up being a focal point of the Conservative party's 2019 election campaign, it is evident that it has only just reached the stage of moving beyond a slogan. The increasing inequity between the North-East and the rest of the UK is widening. The region is in danger of slipping further behind, as the economic and social positions continue to deteriorate at alarming rates. The Truss administration can deliver desperately required policy coordination that targets those areas most in need and should continue to uphold the promise of the Johnson Government to the North -East region, but progress does not seem assured. Worryingly, the Local Government Chronicle (22.9.2022) reported on Prime Minister Truss's possible abandonment of the Levelling Up Flagship Policy.

In Table 3.10 we provide our own assessment of where the levelling up missions are failing now within the region

We recommend a major review in 2023 and new actions to ensure the fulfilment of the levelling up promise within the region. This would include

- Supporting the new Insight North-East (www.insightsnortheast.co.uk) and its plans for Health, Net Zero and Inclusive Growth and fostering stronger collaboration between stakeholders and organisations across the city region. More detailed debate is required of key larger projects which can make a real difference.
- Revisiting employment and sector plans and priorities and the promise of the delivery of renewables in the region with a new revised skills plan for the region following clarification of the devolution deal arrangements for 2024. With a revised focus on adult skills and the Colleges and the role of the five Universities in the region on higher level and appropriate skills training and pathways into work.
- Better central- local debate within the region and externally with Whitehall and Parliament about the region's direction and future plans for Levelling Up. Would an APPG for the North-East be helpful in the current climate to examine central government spending and plans for the region? There is a serious problem with short-termism and fragmentation and policy shifts and drift. We detect a serious lack of discussion and evaluation of programmes for the North-East region and specifically the North-South divide and which programmes are working or not.
- The idea of a Learning region needs a much higher profile together with What Works. Where is the region heading to 2030 if current trends continue? A focus on economic growth alone and new inward investment will not solve the deep-seated problems in

the region without a stronger focus on social and environmental policies. The new Investment Zones along with enterprise zone and freeport policies announced as part of the 'Growth Plan 2022'⁴⁸ will produce limited impacts and take years to trickle down, if at all.

- A better review of the economic, social, and environmental plans for the region in the light of Covid 19 and a clearer set of priorities for development to 2030 which encompasses priorities for Round 3 bidding for LUF and CRF and dovetails with UKSPF plans would allow a focus on building back better.
- A resolution of the devolution deal and city region governance is required for the North-East region to ensure levelling up plans can be better coordinated in collaboration with the Combined Authorities, local authorities, health trusts, cross boundary actors like Nexus and NELEP and quangos such as the Newcastle Gateshead initiative NGI and the regional purchasing organisation- NEPO. There is still too much fragmentation, confusion and lack of strategic leadership governance which is holding the region back.
- The authors propose the establishment of a Regional Summit to be held in 2023 to further develop collaboration across the region.

Table 3.10: Authors Assessment of Mission Progress

2030 Missions	On Track	Stagnant	Off Track	Too Early to Tell
1. Income			✓	
2. Increase R&D				✓
3. Public Transport			✓	
4. Digital Connectivity			✓	
5. Primary Education				✓
6. Training & Skills			✓	
7. Healthy Life Expectancy				✓
8. Well-Being			✓	
9. Pride in Place				✓
10. Housing				✓
11. Crime	✓			
12. Devolution			✓	

Appendix 1: Towns Fund Project Details

Bishop Auckland - £52.9 million

Durham County Council has recently purchased the town's shopping complex the Newgate Centre. On the purchase, Deputy leader of Durham County Council Cllr Richard Bell said 'If we want to revitalise Bishop Auckland and create a vibrant and inviting town centre, it is crucial that a facility such as the Newgate Centre provides a viable and attractive offer. If we can attract more people into the town then we can expect to see more money spent there, which in turn also increases opportunities for employment for local residents.'

Hartlepool -£25 million

The Hartlepool Town Deal Board outlines the Hartlepool investment plan priority projects⁴⁹

- Redevelopment of Middleton Grange shopping centre. In August 2022, Finance and Policy Committee agreed to send the business case to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUCH) to try and unlock £13.9 million in funding for the project.⁵⁰ In September 2022, the Government approved 4 of 5 projects.⁵¹
- Wesley Chapel Hotel Redevelopment: new boutique hotel
- Waterfront Circuit: new waterfront promenade and new public space with pedestrian links and enhanced leisure attractions
- Civil Engineering Institute: skills facility designed to maximise benefits of UK's 5G network.
- Health and Care Academy: health and social care training facility at University Hospital Hartlepool

Redcar - £25 million

All details of the proposals for the Redcar Town Deal are available online⁵². The plan includes:

- Town centre transformation
- A new culture and leisure hub
- Development of Station Road to improve the gateway to the Town
- Development of a Centre for Energy at Redcar & Cleveland College
- Creation of a leisure quarter at Coatham
- Improved walking and cycling links

Thornaby – on -Tees - £24 million

Thornaby Town Deal Board identified four priorities for the area⁵³:

- Tackle the issue of long-term vacant properties in the town centre
- Supporting skills for locals
- New footpath and cycle infrastructure
- Addressing poor quality homes in North Thornaby

Plans have been submitted to the Government around these priorities. These include:

- Creation of a new swimming pool
- Relocation of NETA Training Group
- Home improvements and investment in 'Safer Streets'
- New cycling infrastructure

Darlington - £22 million

The vision of Darlington Town Fund Board is summarised in its investment plan, "Through targeted capital investment and by taking advantage of our unique passenger railway heritage and our growth potential we will ensure Darlington has a strong economic and sustainable future which builds on its sense of place and offers opportunities for all." ⁵⁴

Projects are focused around three geographical areas; the Town Centre, North Road Gateway and Victoria Road Gateway and include:

- Regeneration of Skinnergate and the Yards (£2 million)
- Adult learning space (£1.35 million)
- Specialist T Levels Teaching Space (£2.95 million)
- Regeneration of the Rail Heritage Quarter (RHQ) (£4.6 million)
- Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration for Northgate house and North Road (£6.5 million)
- Repairs to Edward Pease House, a historically significant building (£3.5 million)
- Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration in Linear Park and the River Skerne Corridor (£2.5 million)
- Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration at Victoria Road (£0.6 million)
- Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration at Bank Top Rail Station and Cattle Mart area (£1 million)

Middlesbrough - £36.2 million

Middlesbrough's improvements are centred around five ambitions:⁵⁵

- Transport and connectivity - All travel modes will be enhanced
- Urban communities and place-making - New urban communities, new employment accommodation and a broader leisure mix will be created
- The Middlesbrough experience – the town to become the key destination in Tees Valley
- Building a knowledge economy - Quality of life and outcomes for residents will be improved through education and training
- Enterprise infrastructure - deliver premium commercial space to enable additional employment

Blyth - £32.1 million

The 'Energising Blyth' project outlines Blyth's ambitions as:

- 'By 2030 Blyth will be a thriving UK and international centre of renewable energy and advanced manufacturing growth and innovation, providing new jobs, better skills, more homes, and a clean environment for people in the town and the wider North East region.'⁵⁶

The following strategic objectives have been prioritised:

- Growing Town: increase economy and productivity drawing on clean energy sector strengths
- Vibrant Town: increase vibrancy and activity in the town centre
- Connected Town: make sure the town is well accessible
- Inclusive Town: enable all of those in Blyth can share the economic benefits of growth
- Clean Growth Town: establish Blyth as an example town of clean growth

Projects include:

- Bowes Street, Church Street and Wanley Street Improvements; a resurfaced road, improved lighting, improved appearance, new cycle and footpaths, more car parking and improved drainage. These improvements started in January 2022.⁵⁷
- Reconfigured marketplace with a creative cultural space
- The Laurel Hotel: a new hotel that acts as a 'stepping stone between the more prosperous quayside area and the gateway into the town. Northumberland Council website states funding confirmation is due in the Autumn 2022 and project completion by March 2025.
- Energy Central Institute: research, innovation and skills hub to be delivered by 2026.
- The Link: improvements to cycle routes, footpaths, signage and surfacing to be delivered by March 2024.

Sunderland - £25 million

Funding will deliver five main projects⁵⁸:

- Culture House: new library and cultural hub to be delivered by 2024.
- Elephant Tea Rooms Building: renovation of the historical building.
- Crowtree: preparing the former leisure centre site for investment.
- Keel Square Hotel: provide new retail space to connect High Street West and The Bridges to the new urban quarter
- St Mary's Boulevard: improvement to the pedestrian crossing.

Stockton - £16.5 million

Stockton has become the centre of a leading transformation in town centre regeneration after it purchased the Castlegate Shopping Centre and the Swallow Hotel. In August 2022, the shopping centre and hotel that dominated the town's high street since the 1970s started to be demolished. In their place will be a park three times the size of Trafalgar Square that links directly to the River Tees. On the plans, John Tomaney, professor of

urban and regional planning at University College London, said, 'What you can do is make it a place that people want to visit, that offers amenities and conveys the general sense that it is a place on the up. It's genuinely entrepreneurial and creative on the part of the council to take this approach. It's offering an alternative to the orthodoxy, prioritising the flourishing of the community rather than the competitiveness of the office sector.'⁵⁹

South Shields - £6 million

The fund will see the creation of over 180 homes within walking distance of South Shields town centre. South Tyneside council state such an increased residential population will result in more footfall and therefore more activity in the town centre.⁶⁰

Loftus - £5.8 million

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council have secured funding in addition to the £5.8 million from the Future High Streets fund, with total available funding totalling £9.35 million. They have two projects currently in progress:

- Handale Car Park: increased parking capacity
- Transformation of former Barclay's bank into retail units with visitor accommodation above.

Projects coming in 2022:

- Highway improvements at Zetland Road/West Road and a new short stay car park
- Renovation of the United Reformed Church into a new cultural space
- Lighting up Loftus Town Hall
- More parking and transformation of market place into a more versatile space.
- Clearance of Arlington Chapel
- Arlington highway improvements

Projects coming in 2022/23

- New square and 'Skills and Training Hub'
- Increase aesthetics of Zetland Road
- Rejuvenated community hub with library at Duncan Place and Coronation Park

Projects coming in 2023/24

- New visitor car park at existing library site

Appendix 2: Levelling Up Fund Round Two Bids

The deadline for the second round of the levelling-up fund was in August 2022. No official date on which successful bids will be announced has been provided although is expected to be October 2022. All funding must be spent by 31 March 2025 unless an exceptional circumstance.

Darlington

'Levelling Up Darlington' proposal ⁶¹

- Regeneration: redevelopment of the Northgate ward. Support the work being done by the Towns Fund to bring internationally recognised heritage assets back into use while opening urban green space, housing opportunities and job creation.
- Transport: tackle congestion and create a quality bus corridor. Deliver walking and cycling facilities along the A68.
- Culture: building on rail heritage ahead of the bicentenary celebration of the Stockton and Darlington railway and enhancing the offer of the Rail Heritage Quarter (RHQ) development and delivering a high-quality attraction for 2025.

Hartlepool ⁶²

- £16.5 million bid
- Creation of a production village in the Church Street area. Intended to serve as a catalyst for the towns screen industry
- Also include a new urban park or square
- Both done with aims to attract investment

Redcar and Cleveland

Redcar Constituency Bid ⁶³

- £8 million for retail and commercial regeneration of Eston.
- £8 million for a new swimming pool at Eston and a wider regeneration of the site.
- £4 million for cycle/footpath to link Teesworks site to Eston and south of the borough and a cycle/footpath route linking Guisborough to Nunthorpe.

South Middlesbrough and East Cleveland Bid

- £13.7 million for the town centre and public realm improvements in Guisborough and improved accessibility to Teesworks and North York Moors National Park.
- £1 million to develop a business case to deliver a new transport hub at Guisborough/Nunthorpe focusing on rail and sustainable transport.
- £5 million for the Newham Grange Highway scheme (B1365) to prepare the site for additional housing.

Stockton-on-Tees ⁶⁴

- £20 million for the redevelopment of Billingham Town Centre

Middlesbrough ⁶⁵

Applying for funds to transform House of Fraser and former Crown pub:
House of Fraser

- In July 2020, Middlesbrough Council purchased former House of Fraser building for £1 million
- Also acquired Captain Cook Square for £8 million
- Both purchased using cash from Future High Streets Fund

Durham

Bids are coming from each of the parliamentary constituencies ⁶⁶ £92 million bid for the five schemes, Durham CC have pledged £11.4 million in matched funding.

City of Durham

- Relief road at Bowburn to tackle traffic issues, bring forward the third phase of Integra 61 scheme (a logistics and manufacturing plan)
- Travel measures to enhance city centre connectivity
- Linking new and existing cultural attractions
- Stabilisation works on A690

Easington (focus on Horden)

1. Enable provision of land for social housing
2. Deliver new or enhanced community assets on brownfield land including woodland plantation nature reserve and new community building
3. Enhance local streets to discourage private car use

North Durham (focus on Stanley)

1. High street regeneration. Introduction of new managed workspace, public space, enhancement of wellbeing offer at Louisa Centre and bus station revitalisation
2. Decongestion improvements along the A693, including the Asda roundabout and Oxhill junction
3. Active travel measures to link North Durham Academy and High Street with residential areas, better connect the town with C2C cycle route

North West Durham (focus on Willington, Crook and Tow Law)

1. New community hub, improved parks, Multi Use Games Areas, event spaces, and a BMX track and skate park
2. Improving infrastructure at Low Willington Industrial Estate. Targeted improvement for towns high streets, directional signs, and creation of public space
3. New and upgraded cycling and walking routes within and between the three settlements. New electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support and encourage sustainable travel.

Sedgefield (focus on Newton Aycliffe)

1. Repurposing land and buildings within the town centre to provide flexible amenity space, public transport interchange, reprovision of surface level car parking and enhanced commercial buildings.

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2. Improvement of active travel routes across the town.
 3. Enhancing cultural and well-being offer within the town centre and providing cultural family attraction alongside existing leisure and library services.

Sunderland

Received round one funding

Gateshead ⁶⁷

Bid to cover escalating costs for new arena and conference centre after bid rejected in round one

- Development originally priced at £300 million but hit with rising costs
- Understood building will go ahead regardless of whether the bid is successful. However, could be forced to remove some elements.

New centre to be called the Sage and create 2000 jobs

- Include 12,500 capacity arena that will replace Utilita Arena, conference centre, hotel and new amenities along the quayside

South Tyneside ^{68 69}

Revitalise boroughs of three towns by capitalising on the green economy, innovation and skills.

Jarrow:

- Create a sustainable mid-Tyne. Expansion of Hebburn Minewater and Viking Energy networks
- Investment in Jarrow Hall to create a visitor destination

South Shields:

- Focus on transforming riverside and town centre by boosting footfall
- Projects include the development of a cultural quarter, skills and visitor centre (the Northern Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence at Holborn Renewable Energy Network. Student accommodation offered as part of the relocation of South Tyneside College

Newcastle ⁷⁰

- Enable package of regeneration infrastructure works for a new facility to manage sediment build-up in River Tyne
- £19.4 million bid in addition to funding from North East Local Enterprise Partnership and North of Tyne Combined Authority see total investment reach over £26million

North Tyneside ⁷¹

- Regeneration of North Shields town centre and Fish Quay

-
- New ferry landing (current north jetty be unusable by 2025). The entire project is expected to cost £8.8 million. Nexus agreed to spend £3.2 million of its own money to supplement the government offer.

Northumberland

Bid for nearly £17 million for funding towards new cycling and walking routes in Tynedale and Bedlington ⁷²

- **Bedlington**
 - New and upgraded infrastructure to improve the east to the west link connecting residential and employment areas with the new Northumberland Line station.
- **Tynedale**
 - Link between Hexham train station and Corbridge. The proposed route largely follows A695 between the two.

Improvements for Ashington Town Centre ⁷³

- Over £16 million bid
- Northumberland County Council and its development company Advance Northumberland, North of Tyne Combined Authority also provide matched funding.
- Work done in collaboration with Ashington Town Board
- Location 1: Wansbeck Square
 - Plans to create creative hub for young people, community hub, performance space, council customer service and café.
 - Also improved entrance to Ashington next to the new train station. Part of North of Tyne Combined Authority's Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Strategy
- Location 2: Portland Park
 - New six-screen cinema and two restaurants
 - Improve connection between Grand Corner to Portland Park with a complementary project with funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the County Council.

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