



# APPG Inquiry into Levelling Up

## Session 1: Levelling up social outcomes

*Onwards and upwards: building neighbourhoods of opportunity*

**Date:** Tuesday 26th April 2022

**Time:** 3.00pm – 4.55pm (set-up and tea/coffee 3.00pm – 3.10pm)

**Venue:** Jubilee Room, Westminster Hall

## Panel 1: Levelling up education, skills, and 'beyond the school gates' to improve opportunities and social mobility

Graeme Duncan, Chief Executive,  
Right to Succeed

Simon Parkinson, Chief Executive, WEA

Rebecca Woods, Reece Pocklington  
and Billy Robinson, Award-winning young  
community activists, WE WILL, Ewanrigg  
Local Trust in Maryport

## Panel 2: Improving health and wellbeing outcomes

Professor Mark Gamsu, School of Health and  
Community Studies, Leeds Beckett University

Jim Burt, Executive Director of Programmes,  
National Academy for Social Prescribing

Trisha Bennett, Community Development  
Co-ordinator, Whitley Big Local partnership,  
Reading

## 1. About the Inquiry

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out the government's plan to spread opportunity more equally across the UK. But if this national project is to become a reality, transformational improvements will be needed in those communities that have the least.

This inquiry will establish the baseline outlook for levelling up in 'left behind' neighbourhoods and assess the extent to which the White Paper's policy programme aligns with the needs and aspirations of people who live there.

The work of the APPG to-date has shown these areas face unique and intersecting challenges from low levels of community capacity, depleted civic assets, and poor connectivity. Sessions will build upon this existing evidence base with new research, written submissions and expert testimony used to judge the potential of current proposals and their planned implementation to regenerate 'left behind' neighbourhoods across the country.

Each line of inquiry will be structured around the levelling up focus areas and medium-term missions in order to measure current performance in 'left behind' neighbourhoods and identify key areas for consideration on which the White Paper is silent or could have stronger impact. In doing so, the APPG will propose additional measures and policy recommendations to support a long-term, positive programme of change for communities with the most need.

## 2. What this session will examine

The first session of the APPG's Inquiry into Levelling Up will examine the White Paper's four missions relating to education, skills, health, and wellbeing. These are grouped together under the levelling up objective of "Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are the weakest." This objective is closely linked to the development and investment in human capital, as "improving people's health, education, skills and employment prospects will ensure that everyone, wherever they live, has the opportunity to live fulfilling, healthy and productive lives."<sup>1</sup>

| Focus area   | Mission  |
|--|--|
| <i>Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest</i> |  |
| <b>Education</b>   | Mission 5:<br>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. |
| <b>Skills</b>  | Mission 6:<br>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.                    |
| <b>Health</b>  | Mission 7:<br>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.  |
| <b>Wellbeing</b>   | Mission 8:<br>By 2030, wellbeing will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.  |

<sup>1</sup> Levelling Up the United Kingdom (PDF, hereafter 'White Paper'), p. 186

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### 3. Biographies

#### **Graeme Duncan, Chief Executive, Right to Succeed**

Graeme Duncan is CEO of Right to Succeed, a charity that works to strengthen communities and systems that enable children and young people to succeed. Graeme set up the charity in 2015 after 12 years working in education, fundraising and policy. In 2003, Graeme was the first graduate hired by Teach First and taught for two years in a secondary school serving a highly disadvantaged community. He is passionate about collective working, and establishing a place-based change approach to create strong communities where every child is supported to succeed.

#### **Simon Parkinson, Chief Executive and General Secretary of WEA**

Simon joined the WEA from Co-operative College where he was Principle and CEO for 4 years and previously worked for 19 years at the Royal Mencap Society, including as Director of Education, Learning and Work. He is currently a Board member of SOLIDAR and is vice chair of the SOLIDAR Foundation. Simon also sits as a board member of the (IFWEA) and is a trustee of Forget Me Not Children's Hospice.

#### **Rebecca Woods, Founding Member of WE WILL**

Rebecca is 19 and is from Maryport, Cumbria. She is currently studying Mental Health Nursing at Liverpool John Moore's University, with the intention of getting a job in the NHS crisis team or work within a psychiatric unit. She has been actively involved in community projects since the age of 9. She is a member of the Ewanrigg Local Trust Partnership, a trustee for HUG A MUG Ltd and campaigned for the Save Our Beds initiative.

#### **Reece Pocklington, Founding Member of WE WILL**

A founding member of WE WILL, Reece is 20 and is from Maryport, Cumbria. He currently resides in Preston Lancashire studying filmmaking at the University of Central Lancashire. Reece is a student ambassador, an active member of the WE WILL campaign group and a member of the Ewanrigg Local Trust Partnership.

#### **Billy Robinson, Founding Member of WE WILL**

A founding member of WE WILL, Billy is 21 and is from West Cumbria. He is currently studying medicine at Manchester University.

#### **Professor Mark Gamsu, School of Health and Community Studies, Leeds Beckett University**

Mark is a Professor with an interest in local democracy and health inequalities. He works in the field of local health systems, the voluntary sector and active citizenship. He is a professor at Leeds Beckett University and a fellow of the Faculty for Public Health. He has a specific interest in the inequality and the relationship that members of the public have with their local health system.

#### **Jim Burt, Executive Director of Programmes, National Academy for Social Prescribing**

Jim was formerly Head of Campaigns at Natural England and has been the Senior Responsible Officer for a number of large national outdoor learning projects including the One Million Children Outdoors campaign and the Natural Connections Demonstration Project. He is also the founding Chair of the National Outdoors for All Working Group. Jim is now on secondment to the National Academy for Social Prescribing where he is Executive Director of Programmes.

#### **Trisha Bennett, Community Development Co-ordinator, Whitley Big Local partnership, Reading**

After training as a Community Education Worker in Dundee in the 1970s, Trisha has worked in community development for a wide spectrum of agencies and organisations. She is currently working with the Big Local project in Whitley, Reading, the community in which she lives.

Trisha is also working with the University of Reading as Community lead on the UKRI-funded FoodSEqual research project *Sustainable Food Systems for Disadvantaged Communities*, ensuring those affected by the issue are equal partners in finding solutions.

## 4. Background

For further information on the performance of 'left behind' areas on the 12 Levelling Up missions, see the accompanying research commissioned for the APPG and Inquiry session 1, 'Missions 5-8: spreading opportunity and improving public services.'<sup>2</sup>

### Levelling Up Mission 5: Education

The White Paper places significant emphasis on early years support and education in underpinning future life prospects and job opportunities, whilst also noting the "clear, and often entrenched, spatial disparities in educational attainment in later years."<sup>3</sup>

Mission 5 is intended to reduce spatial inequalities in pupil attainment with a focus on raising literacy and numeracy in primary school children in the worst-performing areas. Educational attainment is a key foundational building block for strengthening human capital allowing people to develop skills, improve wellbeing and participate in their community.

#### White Paper policy programme

- The creation of 55 new Education Investment Areas, covering the third of local authorities in England where educational attainment is currently weakest; learning from Opportunity Areas "to tackle wider issues that may be limiting school improvement"
- Expansion of high-performing multi-academy trusts
- Early Career Framework for teacher professional development
- Schools national funding formula

- Specialist 16-19 maths schools, and new 16-19 free schools in "areas where they are most needed"
- Schools White Paper focusing on "improving literacy and numeracy for those furthest behind"
- Creation of new UK National Academy to "support pupils from all backgrounds and areas to succeed at the very highest levels"
- 'Beyond the school gates' – continued emphasis on centrality of place to early years and families: improvement of children's social care and special education needs and disability services; £300m investment in network of Family Hubs and transformation of Start for Life services in half of local authorities; additional £200m in expansion of Supporting Families programme

#### Performance in 'left behind' neighbourhoods

Analysis of education in 'left behind' neighbourhoods for the APPG shows:

- Pupils living in Local Authorities containing 'left behind' neighbourhoods (LA-LBNs) perform consistently less well than those in Local Authorities containing wards with similarly high levels of deprivation, and the average across England across all key educational milestones
- Pupils in LA-LBNs are less likely to meet the expected standard at Key Stage 2 (63.5%) than those in LA-other deprived areas (64.2%) or England as a whole (65.4%)
- Pupils living in LA-LBNs are less likely to attend a school rated good or outstanding by Ofsted
- Pupils living in LBNs are more likely to be persistently absent than across benchmark areas, with 6.9% of pupils engaged in persistent absence, compared with 6.5% in other deprived areas and 4.6% in England as a whole

<sup>2</sup> OCSI, 'Left behind' neighbourhoods: Performance on the 12 Levelling Up Missions, Missions 5-8, April 2022.

<sup>3</sup> White Paper, p. 187

## Performance of primary school pupils on selected Key Stage 2 indicators

|   | LA-LBN | LA-other deprived | England |
|---|--------|-------------------|---------|
| Percentage of pupils reaching a higher standard in Reading, Writing and Maths                 | 9.4    | 9.7               | 10.7    |
| Total number of pupils reaching the expected standard in Reading test                         | 71.6   | 72.3              | 73.8    |
| Average scaled score (Reading test)   | 103.9  | 104.1             | 104.5   |
| Average progress score for Reading  | -0.058 | 0.011             | 0.03    |
| Percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling test | 77.5   | 77.9              | 78.6    |
| Average scaled score (grammar, punctuation and spelling test)                                 | 106.1  | 106.2             | 106.4   |
| Percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in Maths test                             | 77.9   | 78.5              | 79.2    |
| Average scaled score (Maths test)   | 104.7  | 104.9             | 105.1   |
| Average progress score for Maths  | 0.14   | 0.172             | 0.038   |
| Percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in Writing Teacher Assessment             | 77.9   | 78.2              | 79      |
| Average progress score for Writing  | 0.162  | 0.152             | 0.032   |
| Percentage of pupils working at the expected standard in Science Teacher Assessment           | 81.8   | 82.3              | 83.4    |

Source: Department for Education 2019

### Broader policy context

#### National Funding Formula

A new national funding formula was introduced in 2018-19 to calculate core school funding,<sup>4</sup> billed at the time as a reform to “tackle the historical postcode lottery in school funding.”<sup>5</sup> A 2021 National Audit Office report found that “the implementation of the national funding formula has gradually reduced the differences in per-pupil funding between similar local authorities.”<sup>6</sup>

#### Schools White Paper

The latest Schools White Paper was released in March 2022 and is designed to support the government’s Levelling Up mission for education, through measures such as:

- A minimum school week of 32.5 hours by September 2023

- Ofsted inspection of every school by 2025, including the backlog of ‘outstanding’ schools that haven’t been inspected for many years
- At least £100m to put the Education Endowment Foundation on a long-term footing so they can continue to evaluate and spread best practice in education across the country

### Levelling Up Mission 6: Skills

Mission 6 is intended to increase skills levels to reduce economic inequality and improve employment prospects and human capital in areas characterised as having a large proportion of residents with no or low qualifications. By improving skill levels, it is hoped this will raise the earnings prospects of those who have left school.

<sup>4</sup> [School funding in England](#), Commons Library briefing, CBP08419

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education, [Press release: Plans to end the postcode lottery of school funding revealed](#), 14 December 2016.

<sup>6</sup> National Audit Office, [School funding in England \(PDF\)](#), p. 32

The White Paper notes that: “the UK Government’s goal is to support a high-wage, high-skill economy by building skills and human capital, particularly in places where they are weakest. This includes supporting people to realise their career aspirations without having to leave their communities, and to ensure that local employers have access to the skills they need to grow and thrive.”<sup>7</sup>

### Performance in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods

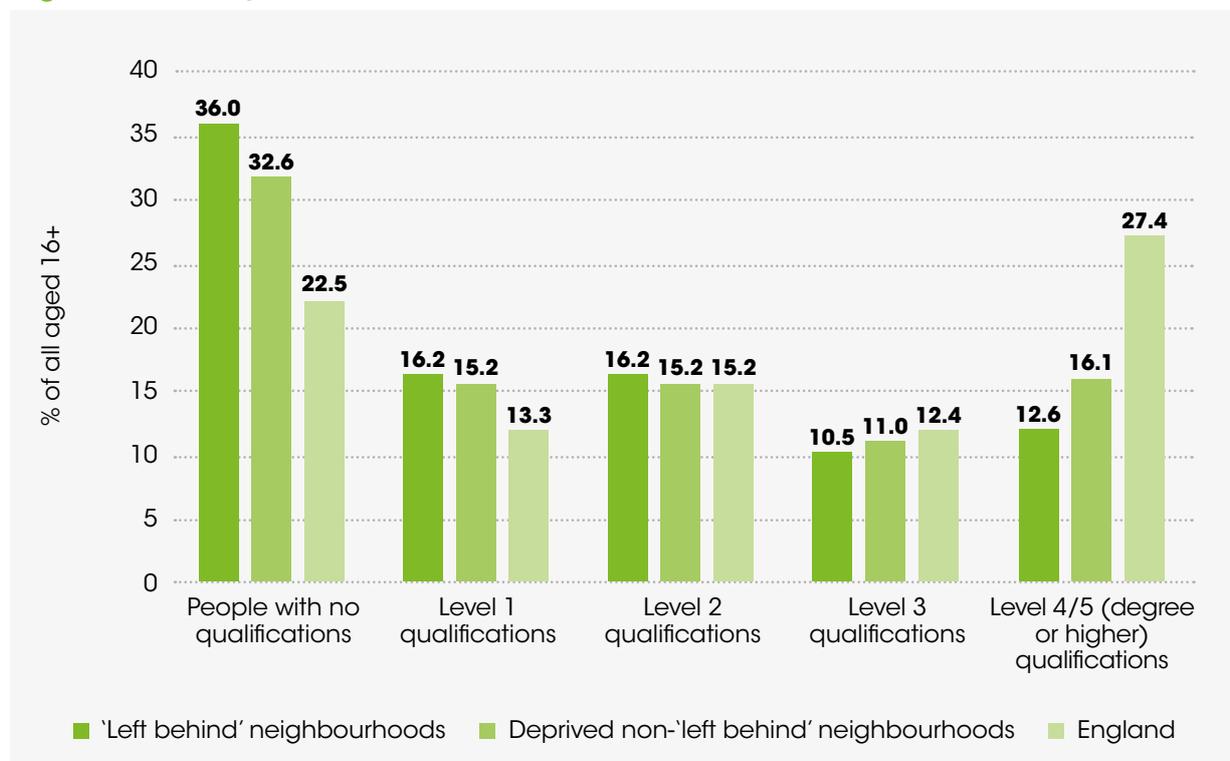
Analysis of skills in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods for the APPG shows:

- People living in Local Authorities containing LBNs have a lower likelihood of holding key FES qualifications than the national average

### Performance in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods (cont.)

- Lower provision of employment-based training and skills, though there is a higher rate of take-up of apprenticeships
- Higher skills gaps, with fewer people holding qualifications to at least level 3 (23.1%) compared to other deprived neighbourhoods (27.1%) and the English average (39.8%)
- Lower proportion of people with professional qualifications (6.7%) compared with 7.5% in deprived areas and the English average of 14.1%. This reflects the relative lack of high skilled employment opportunities in such areas
- Lower participation in higher education, with 26.3% of young adults progressing to university compared to 33% in other deprived areas and 40% of young adults in England as a whole

### Highest level of qualification



Source: Census 2011

<sup>7</sup> White Paper, p. 193

## White Paper policy programme

Putting local employers at the heart of provision

- Employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans; reform of funding and accountability for FE; quadrupling of Skills Bootcamps
- New T Levels for 16-19; Higher Technical Qualifications; enhanced recruitment services for SMEs for apprenticeships
- Pathfinder areas for alignment of employment and skills interventions

Strengthening locally accessible institutions

- 21 Institutes of Technology; Civic University Network and Agreements; new HE providers; refocusing university Access and Participation Plans on social mobility

Lifelong learning: ensuring that all individuals have lifetime access to training

- Expansion of Lifetime Skills Guarantee for adults without level 3 qualification; flexible Lifelong Loan Entitlement; Multiply numeracy programme (UKSPF)

New opportunities to access high quality work and progress in the workplace

- In-work Progression offer with work coach support for people on low incomes
- Employment support for people with a disability or health conditions
- Extension of Work and Health Programme; Intensive Personalised Employment Support; further proposals in Health and Disability Green Paper

## Broader policy context

### The Lifetime Skills Guarantee

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee was announced in September 2020, including £1.5bn for upgrading and improving colleges across the country – £200million

of which was released in 2020.<sup>8</sup> In 2021, 400 free courses became available to adults without a full qualification at Level 3 (A-level equivalent).<sup>9</sup> The scheme is backed by £95million from the National Skills Fund and £43 million has been committed to expand the “Skills Bootcamps” first launched in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Liverpool City Region in Autumn 2020, offering free, flexible courses for 12-16 weeks to build up sector-specific skills.

### Department for Education’s Skills for Jobs White Paper

DfE’s White Paper was released in January 2021 – with a focus on post-16 skills “to increase productivity, support growth industries, and give individuals opportunities to progress in their careers.”<sup>10</sup> It also included plans to pilot Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) in 2021-2022 to shape technical skills provision.

### Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL]

The Bill was introduced in the House of Lords in May 2021, with an aim to improve the skills and post-16 education system in England.

### Levelling Up Mission 7: Health

The White Paper states that “the UK Government’s goal is to tackle the stark disparities in health outcomes across the UK, ensuring people have the opportunity to live long, healthy lives wherever they live.”<sup>11</sup> Mission 7 aims to improve the general health of the population and raise healthy life expectancies. Increasing healthy life expectancy can help reduce pressure on public services and increase productivity by supporting people to be able to work who would be otherwise prevented due to long-term health conditions.

<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [PM’s skills speech](#), 29 September 2020

<sup>9</sup> Department for Education, [Press release: Hundreds of free qualifications on offer to boost skills and jobs](#), 1 April 2021

<sup>10</sup> Department for Education, [Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#), January 2021

<sup>11</sup> White Paper, p. 200

## Health in 'left behind' neighbourhoods

Recent research by the APPG in collaboration with OCSI and the Northern Health Science Alliance found that 'left behind' areas have among the worst health outcomes in England, with growing disparities between them and the rest of the country.<sup>12</sup>

The report discovered:

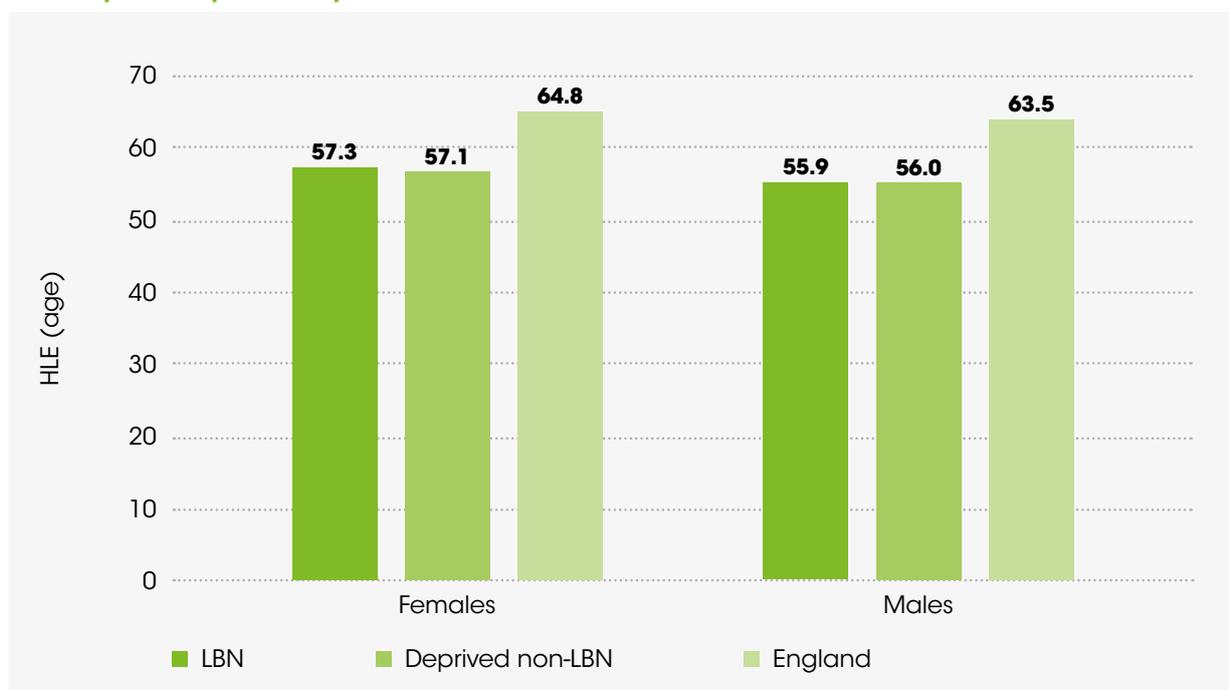
- People living in 'left behind' neighbourhoods were 46% more likely to die from COVID-19 than those in the rest of England and 7% more likely to have died of the virus than those living in deprived non-LBN areas
- Men in 'left behind' neighbourhoods live 3.7 years and women 3 years fewer than the national average. People in these neighbourhoods can both expect to live 7.5 fewer years in good health than their counterparts in the rest of England
- Tackling the health inequalities facing local authorities with 'left behind' neighbourhoods and bringing them up to England's average could add an extra £29.8bn to the country's economy each year

## Health in 'left behind' neighbourhoods (cont.)

Further analysis of health in 'left behind' neighbourhoods for the APPG shows:

- A higher prevalence of key health conditions including cancer and conditions associated with cardiovascular diseases (including high blood pressure, diabetes, coronary heart disease, COPD and strokes) in these areas than across other deprived areas and England as a whole
- Higher levels of risk factors including higher prevalence of adults smoking and lower levels of physical activity than across other deprived areas and England as a whole
- Local Authorities containing 'left behind' neighbourhoods experience higher mortality rates from causes considered preventable – 30.7 per 100,000 than across similarly deprived Local Authorities (29.1) and England (28.1)

## Healthy Life Expectancy



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2009-2013

<sup>12</sup> Munford, Mott et al., [Overcoming health inequalities in 'left behind' neighbourhoods \(PDF\)](#), January 2022

| Prevalence of key health conditions   | LBNs  | Deprived non-LBNs | England |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|---------|
| High Blood Pressure                   | 15.45 | 13.89             | 14.29   |
| Diabetes                              | 8.46  | 8.39              | 7.14    |
| Coronary Heart Disease                | 3.73  | 3.25              | 3.15    |
| COPD                                  | 3.08  | 2.49              | 1.98    |
| Stroke and Transient Ischaemic Attack | 2.00  | 1.75              | 1.84    |
| Atrial Fibrillation                   | 2.04  | 1.76              | 2.10    |
| Cardiovascular Disease                | 1.30  | 1.17              | 1.19    |
| Heart Failure                         | 1.04  | 0.95              | 0.91    |
| Peripheral Arterial Disease           | 0.85  | 0.72              | 0.61    |

Source: House of Commons Library 2019/2020

## White Paper policy programme

### Improving public health

- NHS Long Term Plan; Core20PLU55 to level up healthcare in poorest 20%
- Roll out of social prescribing and link workers, connecting people to community groups and statutory services; cross-government action on mental health through green social prescribing “focusing particularly on communities most affected by health disparities.”
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to tackle preventable risk factors; new White Paper on Health Disparities, to learn “how best to mobilise communities and a range of partners to address shared health challenges”
- 10 year Drugs Strategy 2021; new Tobacco Control Plan; weight management services; Better Health: Rewards pilot; review of NHS Health Check Programme

### Supporting people to change their food and diet

- New Food Strategy White Paper to implement recommendations from the Dimpleby Review; new approach to school food standards; school cooking curriculum and training; piloting Community Eatwell programme

## Tackling diagnostic backlogs

- 100 Community Diagnostic Centres by 2025
- People at the Heart of Care White Paper 2021, community living proposals

## Broader policy context

### Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)

OHID officially launched on 1 October 2021 as part of a wider Government restructure of national public health bodies in England.<sup>13</sup> Its focus is on “improving the nation’s health so that everyone can expect to live more of life in good health, and on levelling up health disparities to break the link between background and prospects for a healthy life.”<sup>14</sup>

### 2019 NHS Long Term Plan

The NHS Long Term Plan reflects ambitions for the National Health Service over a ten-year period. It aims to “give people more control over their own health” and “encourage more collaboration between GPs, their teams and community services”, as well as a focus on tackling health inequalities, with a particular focus on the communities and groups most impacted by ill health.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and Health Inequalities, Commons Library debate pack, 2022/0015

<sup>14</sup> UK Government, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

<sup>15</sup> NHS, The NHS Long Term Plan – a summary, January 2019

## National Food Strategy and independent review

In July 2020 the Dimpleby Report was published, setting out 7 recommendations forming the National Food Strategy. To date, the Government has acted on four of the recommendations: extending the Holiday Activities and Food programme throughout 2021, increasing the value of Healthy Start vouchers, agreeing to continue collecting and monitoring data on food insecurity and adopting the recommendation that an independent report be commissioned on any proposed trade agreement. The Government has not (i) given preferential tariffs to food products meeting our core standards (ii) committed to giving Parliament the time to scrutinise new trade deals, (iii) expanded the eligibility of the free school meal scheme to include every child up to 16 from a household where a parent or guardian receives Universal Credit or equivalent benefits.<sup>16</sup>

## Levelling Up Mission 8: Wellbeing

Wellbeing is an all-encompassing measure that underpins progress across all of the capitals and missions outlined in the Levelling up White paper. It is defined in the White Paper as capturing “the extent to which people across the UK lead happy and fulfilling lives – the very essence of levelling up. It is affected by a variety of different facets of people’s lives, from physical and mental health to jobs, community relationships and wider factors that influence quality of life such as the environment.”<sup>17</sup>

Wellbeing will be measured through the existing Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey of personal wellbeing at the local authority level, covering indicators including life satisfaction, happiness and anxiety.<sup>18</sup>

## Wellbeing in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods

Analysis of both traditional measures and wider determinants of wellbeing in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods for the APPG shows:

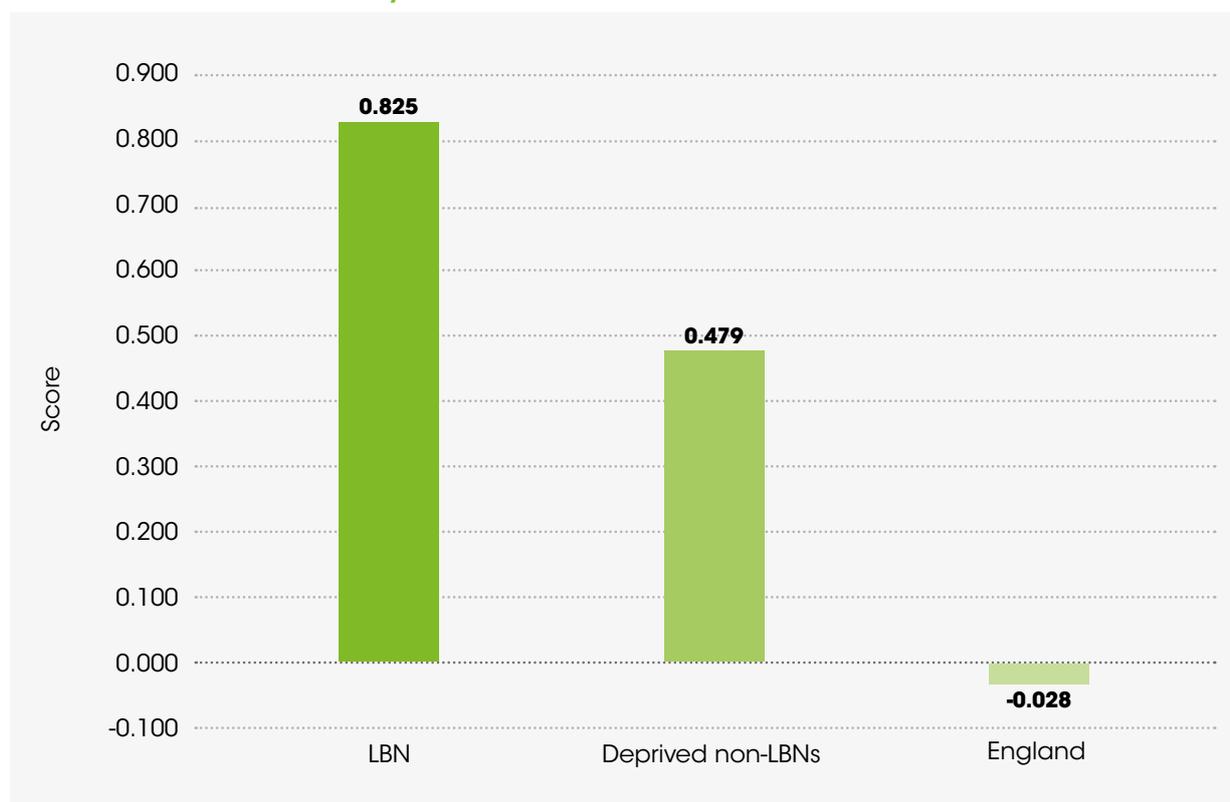
- Local Authorities containing ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods generally perform worse than the national average on key measures of wellbeing. The most notable gap is in terms of levels of life satisfaction, with those in LA-LBNs scoring an average of 7.49, compared with an average of 7.57 across England as a whole
- Both LBNs and Deprived non-LBNs perform less well than the national average on the majority of social connectedness measures. However, there is no clear evidence that LBNs perform notably worse than Deprived non-LBNs
- 215 out of 225 LBNs see greater mental health challenges compared to the national average
- LBNs perform poorly relative to deprived non-LBNs on all key measures relating to green space, with a lower density of green assets (272.9 compared with 366.1) a lower number of parks and gardens (an average of 4.6 in a 1km radius) and lower areas of recreational green space (5.8% compared with 8.7%). LBNs also have a lower density of green assets than the national average

<sup>16</sup> National Food Strategy: Independent Review (PDF)

<sup>17</sup> White Paper, p. 186

<sup>18</sup> Levelling up: What are the Government’s proposals?. Commons library briefing CBP9463, p. 27

## IoD 2019 Mood and anxiety disorder indicator



Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2013 to 2018

## Broader policy context

### Mental Health Education Action Group

In March 2021 the government established a new coalition of health and education experts to look at the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and education staff across England.<sup>19</sup>

### Going beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The use of a wellbeing measure as an alternative to GDP and key indicator of national performance when setting government budgets, policies and priorities has long been mooted, with a more recent policy focus on loneliness and efforts to promote greater wellbeing at the community level.

<sup>19</sup> Department for Education, [Press release: New Action Group to boost mental health education](#), 9 March 2021