

**Local Trust**  
trusting  
local  
people



Shared Intelligence



# *Everybody needs good neighbourhoods*

The impact of resident-led  
neighbourhood-based initiatives  
in deprived communities

An experimental research paper  
December 2023

# Local Trust

## About Local Trust

Local Trust is a national charity set up in 2011 to deliver the Big Local programme. We believe that trusting communities and giving them more power will enable local people to significantly improve their quality of life and the places in which they live.

We support Big Local partnerships by helping them to manage their grants, network with their peers and develop the skills they need to deliver lasting local change. Local Trust also provides specialist technical support to Big Local areas, as well as monitoring and evaluating the overall programme. Local Trust's work contributes to our wider aims of demonstrating the value of long term, resident-led funding. Using the learnings from the Big Local programme, we're working to bring about a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and other agencies engage with communities.

[localtrust.org.uk](http://localtrust.org.uk)

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## About OCSI

Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) works with public and community organisations to improve services. OCSI turns complex datasets into engaging stories, and makes data, information and analysis accessible for communities and decision makers. A spin-out from Oxford University, OCSI has helped hundreds of public and community sector organisations to make their services more efficient and effective.

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## About Shared Intelligence

Shared Intelligence is a public policy research consultancy with UK-based clients in central, regional, and local government, as well as charities and non-profits. It undertakes strategy development, research, and evaluation with a focus on peer learning and stakeholder engagement.

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Cover photo: Dyke House Big Local.

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# An experimental approach

This research is a unique attempt to do robust statistical analysis using bespoke 'counterfactuals' to benchmark areas. It is an interesting experimental method, but it is a trial methodology, which comes with a number of caveats, including around sample size and causality.

An important part of this research has been the categorisation of areas as either having:

- some form of neighbourhood-based working (including resident-led models like Big Local or professional-led models), or
- no form of neighbourhood-based working.

This categorisation was made through a manual research process involving web-based searches and evidence-gathering phone calls to local elected representatives, council officers, and community organisations.

If any form of neighbourhood-based working was found, then the area was categorised as 'positive'. If none was found, it was categorised as a null or 'counterfactual', and considered as a possible benchmark area (i.e., a dummy variable approach). Categorisation is explained in detail in Appendix A.

The limitations of this approach should be noted. These include:

- **Negatives are harder to prove.** If we found evidence of neighbourhood-based working, we could use documents and/or conversations with individuals to acquire more detail. But finding no evidence at all cannot conclusively prove that no form of neighbourhood-based working exists; it could just be that we did not speak with the right person or follow the right leads.
- **Borderline definitions.** In some cases the evidence was borderline. For example, an organisation might carry out some of the activities associated with neighbourhood-based working, but might operate at a larger geographic scale and therefore be quite dilute at the local level. In such cases we had to make a subjective judgement about how to categorise.

Nevertheless, we believe that the initial findings presented here are exciting and clearly flag the need for further research into the positive impact of neighbourhood-based initiatives, locality working, and the role of residents and communities in the stewardship of their local area. We are currently engaged in a follow-up piece of work to identify a larger sample size of counterfactuals with which to run the research.

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# Key findings

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This experimental research reveals the potential impact of 'neighbourhood-based initiatives' (NBIs) on a range of outcomes around local quality of life and the health of local social relationships within a geographic community. The research points to the potential benefits of NBIs, particularly those that are resident-led, in improving quality of life in a local area. The findings have policy implications for central and local government, as well as for communities themselves.

Conducted over the past two years by Local Trust and our partners at OCSI and Shared Intelligence, the research is a unique mix of qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis. It seeks to assess the effect of NBIs – such as those funded through the Big Local programme (delivered by Local Trust) – on crime, anti-social behaviour and other 'liveability' issues in deprived areas, and what part NBIs can play in strengthening crucial social capital.

The approach compares the performance of a sample of highly deprived wards, across varied locations, where a Big Local or some other form of NBI is present, benchmarked against similar – and equally deprived – wards which do not have such locality working at the neighbourhood level. The aim is to evaluate the impact of Big Local and other forms of NBI, compared to a 'counterfactual' benchmark group.

Compared to the 'benchmark' areas with no evidence of neighbourhood-based working, Big Local areas and other examples of communities with NBIs exhibit:

- lower overall levels of crime
- a greater reduction in levels of anti-social behaviour
- a greater reduction in levels of criminal damage
- a better neighbourhood environment
- fewer empty homes
- stronger local social relationships (such as connections between neighbours).

## Policy implications

These research findings have implications for local and central government policy-making, particularly given the debate over levelling up and the nature and scale of investment needed to tackle place-based inequalities, especially in the most 'left behind' neighbourhoods.

The research is also highly relevant given renewed interest in more preventative public services. These focus on stopping problems arising in the first place, rather than the state picking up the pieces afterwards at an increased cost. Communities have a vital role to play here. On a number of cross-cutting issues – from crime prevention and community safety, to tackling loneliness and building community resilience – the findings suggest that, to be effective, policy should be developed through a neighbourhood lens and implemented in a way that puts local people in the driving seat.

We believe this research is a modest but potentially important contribution to the evidence base on the value of investing in communities, and on the merits of neighbourhood working that puts decision-making in the hands of local people. Communities across the country are facing a cost of living crisis, whilst often still recovering from the pandemic; loneliness is a growing and silent epidemic, as deadly as smoking; and our social fabric and public services are under increasing strain (University of York, 2023; Nesta, 2023). Our connections and relationships with each other in our community can bring hope, instil confidence, promote wellbeing, and help build a shared pride in our neighbourhoods and the places we call home (DLUHC, 2022; Bennett Institute, 2022).



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# Why we conducted this research

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Local Trust commissioned this research to test our hypothesis that ‘locality working’ through neighbourhood-based initiatives (NBIs) at the hyper-local level – particularly those, like the Big Local partnerships, led by local residents themselves – have a positive impact on a local area and the people who live there. We also wanted to see whether we could do this using large public domain datasets; this would get us closer to creating a set of ‘counterfactuals’ against which we can benchmark the performance over time of the 150 disadvantaged communities across England that make up the Big Local programme.

Through our decade of work supporting residents and communities to take action to improve their local area, we know that a person’s prospects and prosperity are increasingly tied to where they live, the condition of their local neighbourhood, its levels of deprivation, and access to vital local social infrastructure (Local Trust, 2019). We also know, from our foundational research into some of the most marginalised communities in the country, that these spatial inequalities in outcomes are deeply ingrained, with multi-generational effects (OCSI, 2020).

At the start of this century the then Labour government promised that “within ten to 20 years, no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live” (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). And recent research into the impact of past major neighbourhood regeneration initiatives (commissioned by Local Trust) demonstrates their overall positive impact (Sheffield Hallam University, 2023).

However, it is ten years since the last major programme ended and the socio-economic tide has been against the most deprived neighbourhoods and for many communities nothing has changed – and, for some, things have got worse, not better.

## Location, location, location

We can see the extent of such spatial inequalities in outcomes most clearly in analysis of key data relating to the 225 areas in England identified by Local Trust research as ‘left behind’. From levels of educational attainment to the cost of living crisis, for many of our citizens poorer life chances are still a question of ‘location, location, location’. Research for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods has found that the most ‘left behind’ areas in England experience nine key dimensions of disadvantage which interact and reinforce each other, leading to poorer outcomes overall (APPG for ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods, 2023). These include:

### Education and employment

- Higher rates of worklessness, a lower share of people working in skilled employment, and lower levels of economic activity than the national average
- Fewer people with level 3 qualifications, lower overall levels of educational attainment, and lower participation in higher education.

## Health and wellbeing

- Higher prevalence of 15 of the 21 most common health conditions, including high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Nearly twice the proportion of people out of work due to sickness than the national average, with 10 per cent of working-age adults receiving disability benefits.

## Poverty and financial vulnerability

- Disproportionately higher rates of child poverty and lower household income estimates than the national average across all measures
- Greater vulnerability to the cost of living crisis, with an 8.8 per cent rise in fuel poverty between 2011 and 2020 compared to 2.3 per cent for England as a whole.

Day-to-day quality of life issues also play out at the neighbourhood level. For example, experience of crime and anti-social behaviour, and the levels of trust and resilience in a community, impact on everything – from our sense of identity and belonging, to our feelings of happiness and security (ONS, 2022a). The strength of the social bonds in an area can also influence a community's ability to cope in a crisis (TSRC, 2022).

Research into those 'left behind' communities experiencing high levels of deprivation and low levels of social infrastructure found that – through no fault of their own – they were less successful in attracting COVID-specific charitable grant funding during the pandemic compared to other disadvantaged areas, and saw fewer local mutual aid groups set up in response to the crisis (APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods, 2020). A lack of resources means these communities lack the knowledge, experience and networks to successfully apply for funding and mutual support tends to be informal as opposed to organised.

Given the current and future challenges we are facing – from the ongoing cost of living crisis to the threats posed by climate change – it is clear that the health of social relationships has never been more important. Through the Big Local programme, we know how powerful and effective neighbourhood-based action informed and led by the needs of local residents can be to help improve local outcomes, as well as foster civic pride and strengthen community bonds.

## A new research approach

In order to evaluate the impact of NBIs such as the Big Local programme, we examined the performance on key indicators of liveability and community need of a sample of highly deprived wards, in diverse geographical locations, where neighbourhood working is established. This analysis focused on metrics with real data available at ward and/or LSOA (lower-layer super output area) level, avoiding modelled data where possible. Where modelling was unavoidable (that is, in measuring performance of local community strength), we modelled findings from the DCMS Community Life Survey.

In order to do a comparative statistical analysis of outcomes across a range of datasets, we then benchmarked performance against similarly deprived wards which do not have such neighbourhood working. These benchmark groups were identified through desk research and a series of interviews.

Mixing qualitative and quantitative research in this way enabled us to produce a set of 'counterfactuals'. These are wards which, as far as possible, mirror the typologies and material conditions of the wards with established NBIs but which themselves have no such active engagement



This research is small scale in size and experimental in nature. However, its findings suggest that – with the right resources, support and attention at the neighbourhood level – quality of life issues and the strength of the social fabric need not be a postcode lottery. Clear patterns in this statistical analysis point to the potential

that neighbourhood-based working can have in improving some of the local issues that residents care most about.

In this paper, we look first at a comparison of Big Local areas together with other types of NBIs and their performance against the benchmark groups.

### Defining neighbourhood working and NBIs

For the research, we defined ‘neighbourhood working’ as organised advocacy, engagement, or coordination functions focused on a neighbourhood scale (that is, at a ward level). Examples of neighbourhood working ranged from resident-led initiatives, such as Big Local partnerships, to professional-led approaches to local neighbourhood working managed by local authority officers and forms of local representative democracy in the shape of parish and town councils (the lowest tier of elected government). We have collectively referred to all these approaches as NBIs: however, for the purposes of the research and its findings, it is important to define and distinguish between the two broad types of NBIs – resident-led and professional-led.

- Resident-led NBIs both work directly with and are led by individuals living, working or studying in the local area that is the focus of the initiative
- Professional-led NBIs work through other organisations or are directed by people living outside of the local neighbourhood (for example, council officers), and which help support local community-led action.

For more detail on the distinctions between resident-led and professional-led NBIs see Appendix B.

We have referred to NBIs and ‘neighbourhood based working’ although in some places the term ‘locality based’ initiative might be used locally. The areas in question are typically the size of a local government electoral ward; in urban areas these could be synonymous with ‘neighbourhood’, but in rural areas other terms might be used like ward, locality, village, or community.

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# Identifying NBI and benchmark areas

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The starting point of the research was to identify a set of wards where a Big Local partnership was present. The selected set of Big Local areas were drawn from five distinct categories of neighbourhood:

- Coastal communities
- Housing estates
- Inner city areas
- Former mining communities
- Rural/small towns.

## The Big Local model

The Big Local programme is the largest resident-led neighbourhood-based initiative currently in operation in England, and all participating areas face significant deprivation challenges. The Big Local model of NBI is predicated on building confidence and capacity amongst those residents wanting to make a difference to their community and local area. Big Local equips local people with the skills, resources and long-term funding needed to identify local priorities, implement an action plan to address issues within the neighbourhood, and deliver improvements that the local community has called for.

The next stage was to identify a set of areas which could be used as 'counterfactuals' against which to benchmark the performance of these Big Local/NBI areas on key liveability outcomes. Potential benchmark areas were selected from each of the five categories of neighbourhood, where they matched the selected Big Local/NBI areas in terms of deprivation levels and socio-economic characteristics. The approach for identifying these potential benchmark areas is described in detail in Appendix A.

Shared Intelligence then conducted extensive qualitative analysis of these potential benchmark areas using interviews and desk research, to determine which of these had no form of NBI present and could therefore serve as counterfactuals. Shared Intelligence also sought to identify what forms of NBI were in operation in any of these areas. The extent of NBIs varied considerably across these areas, including what we have identified as both resident-led and professional-led forms of NBI.

Through this analysis it was possible to identify both areas with some evidence of either resident- or professional-led NBIs, and areas with no evidence of neighbourhood working. Those with evidence of resident- or professional-led NBIs were grouped

alongside Big Local areas as the 'treatment group' in this analysis; they are referred to throughout this analysis as 'Big Local/ NBI areas'. Those areas with no evidence of any NBIs are referred to as 'benchmark areas' and serve as the counterfactuals.

**Table 1 shows the 24 wards (in total) selected for each of the five neighbourhood categories.**

|                           |  |                              |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Coastal communities       | Sidley, Newington, Harbour, Weston-super-Mare South, Weston-super-Mare Central | Melcombe Regis, Sandhill     |
| Housing estates           | Northwood, Smith's Wood, Orchard Park and Greenwood                            | Brambles & Thorntree, County |
| Inner city areas          | Lozells and East Handsworth, Wycliffe, Little Horton                           | Picton, St Matthew's         |
| Former mining communities | Woodhouse Close, Ewanrigg, De Bruce  | Shirebrook North West        |
| Rural/small towns         | Sheppey East, West Clacton & Jaywick Sands                                     | Sheerness                    |

Wards from each of the five categories of community have been combined to create two summary sets:

- 1) Big Local/NBI areas – 16 wards
- 2) Benchmark areas – 8 wards

These two sets of areas are compared on a series of key indicators relating to neighbourhood liveability, community need and strength of social capital, grouped into the following themes:

1. Crime and anti-social behaviour
2. Neighbourhood environment
3. Self-reported strength of local community and social relationships
4. Community need.



# Crime and anti-social behaviour

In this section, we look at crimes which impact on neighbourhood liveability, such as anti-social behaviour and criminal damage.

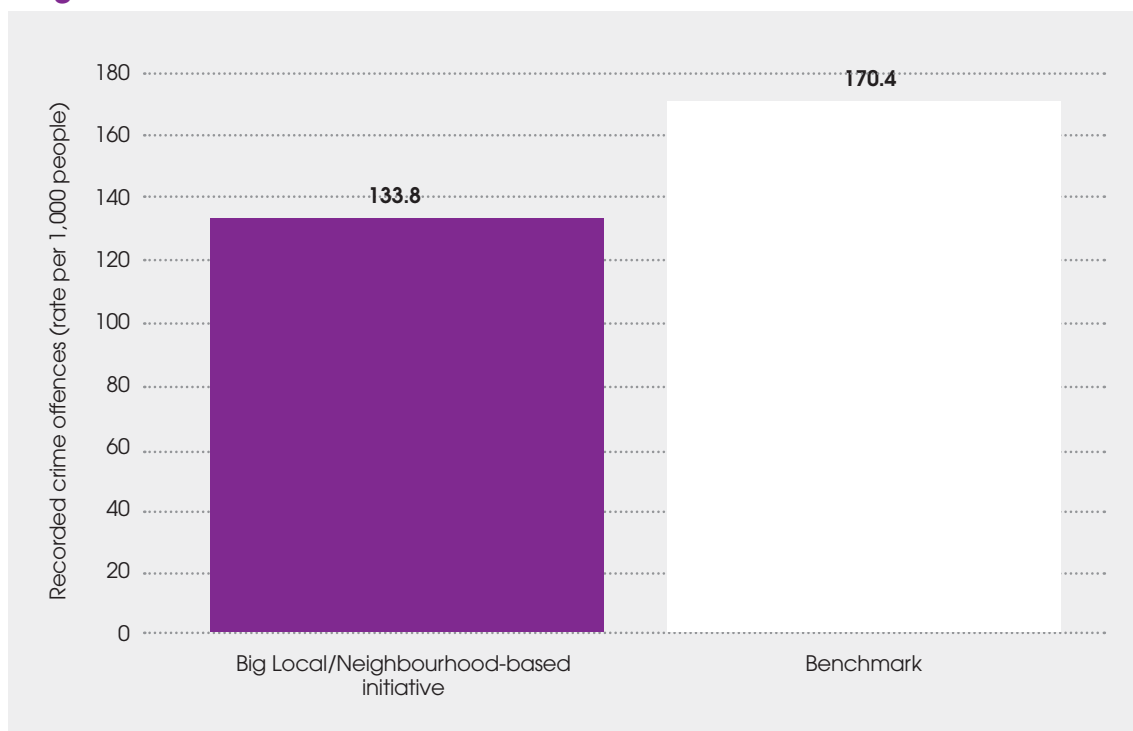
**Finding: Crime is lower in Big Local/NBI areas than across benchmark areas with no NBIs.**

Crime and fear of crime feature regularly as key issues affecting individuals and communities and liveability in a local area. The negative impact of crime is not just restricted to those individuals who are victims, but also spreads to friends, family, neighbours and colleagues (ONS, 2022b). If left unchecked, these problems may become self-reinforcing, as more and more people in an area experience victimisation,

either personally or via someone they know (Damm et al, 2014). If such problems persist over time, a neighbourhood may gain a reputation as a dangerous place to live, resulting in people moving out of the area, which can further reinforce a cycle of decline.

Figure 1 compares overall recorded crime levels in Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas (based on all notified offences recorded by the police by location of offence).

**Figure 1: Total crime offences (rate per 1,000 population): Sep-21 to Aug-22 - Big Local/NBI areas and Benchmark areas**



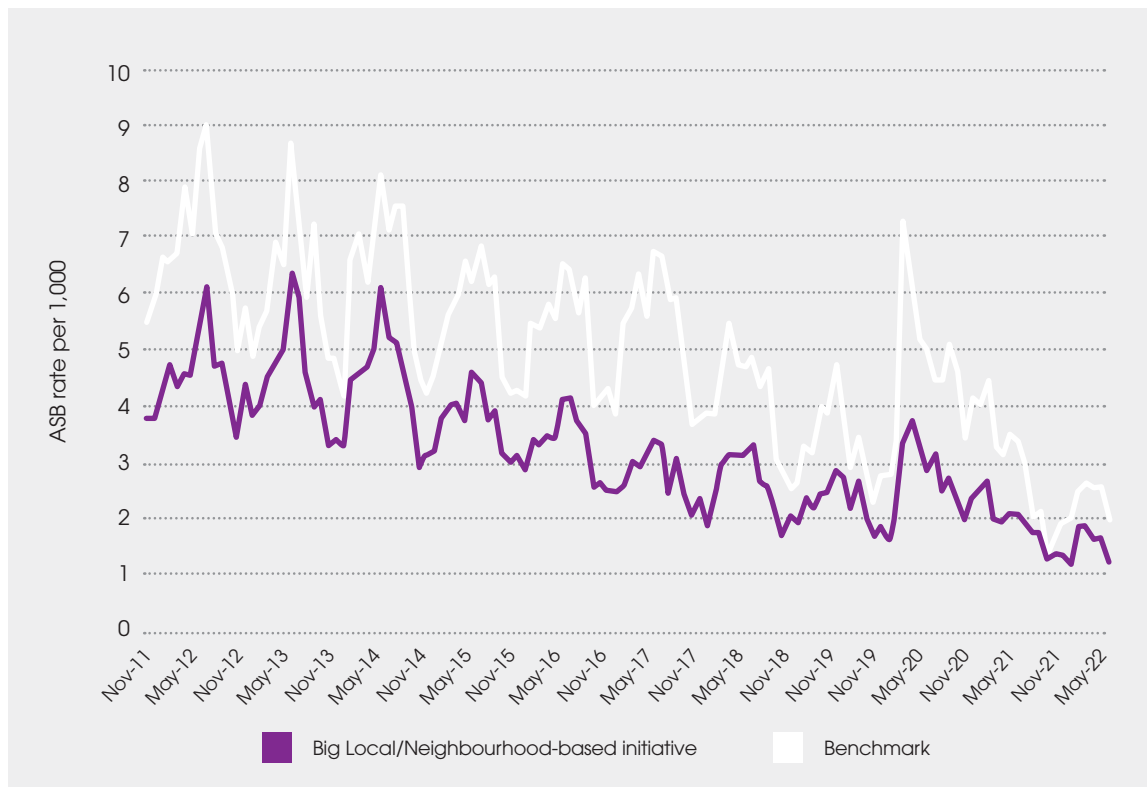
Big Local/NBI areas had lower instances of recorded crime than benchmark areas, suggesting that Big Local/NBIs may have a positive impact in terms of reducing crime. However, it is important to caveat both that this is a limited sample size, and that Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas are generally located in different police force areas; although there is a national crime recording standard, some variation in crime may be affected by variations in recording practices across police force areas.

It is also interesting to look at how crime rates are changing over time in these neighbourhoods to explore whether Big Locals/NBIs have had an impact. Figure 2 shows month-on-month changes in crime rates over an 11-year period for the Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas from 2011 to 2022.

**Finding: Big Local/NBI areas exhibit consistently lower levels of anti-social behaviour than benchmark areas.**

Figure 2 shows that there has been a general reduction in anti-social behaviour across Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas alike between 2011 and 2022. However, Big Local/NBI areas have experienced consistently lower levels and fewer fluctuations in recorded instances of anti-social behaviour.

**Figure 2: Anti-social behaviour offences (rate per 1,000 people) between 2011 and 2022**



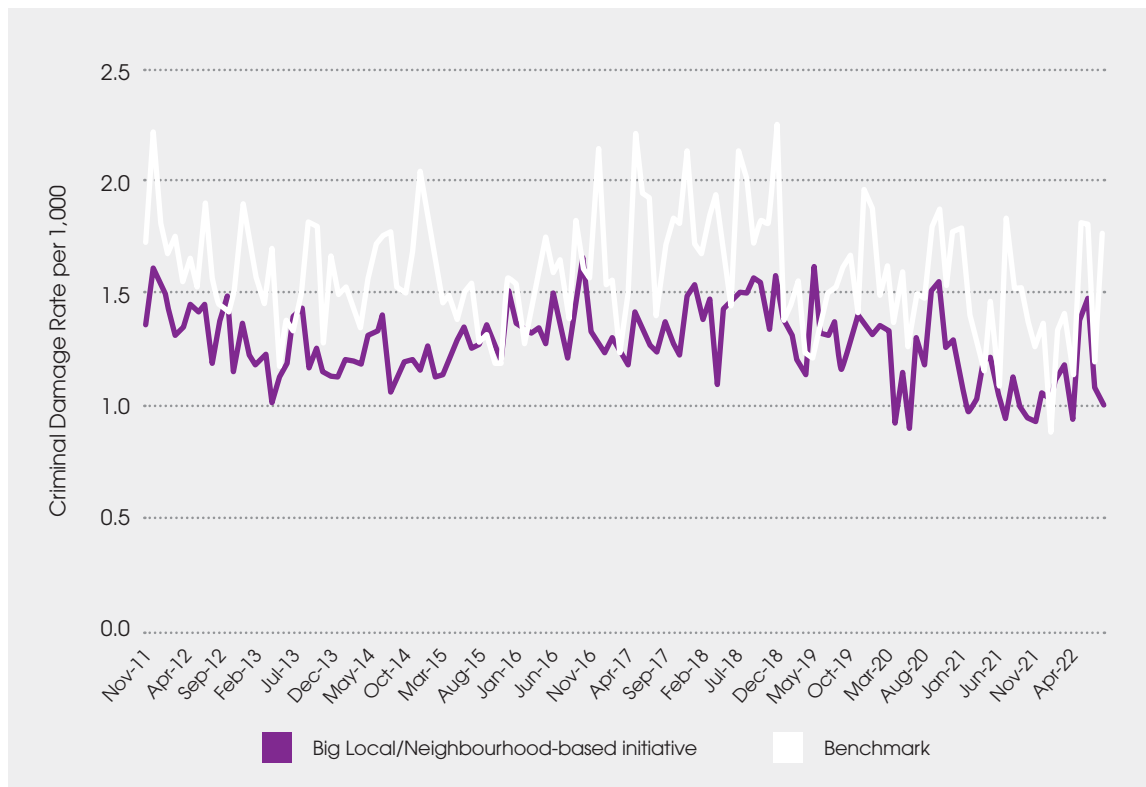
**A similar pattern is observed in terms of criminal damage, with a greater improvement in Big Local/NBI areas in recent years.**

Figure 3 compares performance on criminal damage over an 11-year period.

Again, Big Local/NBI areas have generally

experienced lower incidents of criminal damage than benchmark areas with no Big Locals/NBIs. Although both types of areas have shown a general reduction in levels of criminal damage between 2011 and 2022, Big Local/NBI areas have shown a more consistent reduction over this period compared to the benchmark areas.

**Figure 3: Criminal damage offences (rate per 1,000 people) between 2011 and 2022**





# Neighbourhood environment

Relatively few indicators directly capture the environment of local areas: environmental data on street cleanliness, fly-tipping and graffiti are largely recorded at local authority rather than neighbourhood level. In this section, we have therefore pulled together indirect measures of neighbourhood environment, including the Indices of Deprivation Living Environment domain, which captures poor quality housing and outdoor deprivation. We also consider the numbers of empty homes in the neighbourhood as low levels of demand for housing reflect neighbourhood decay.

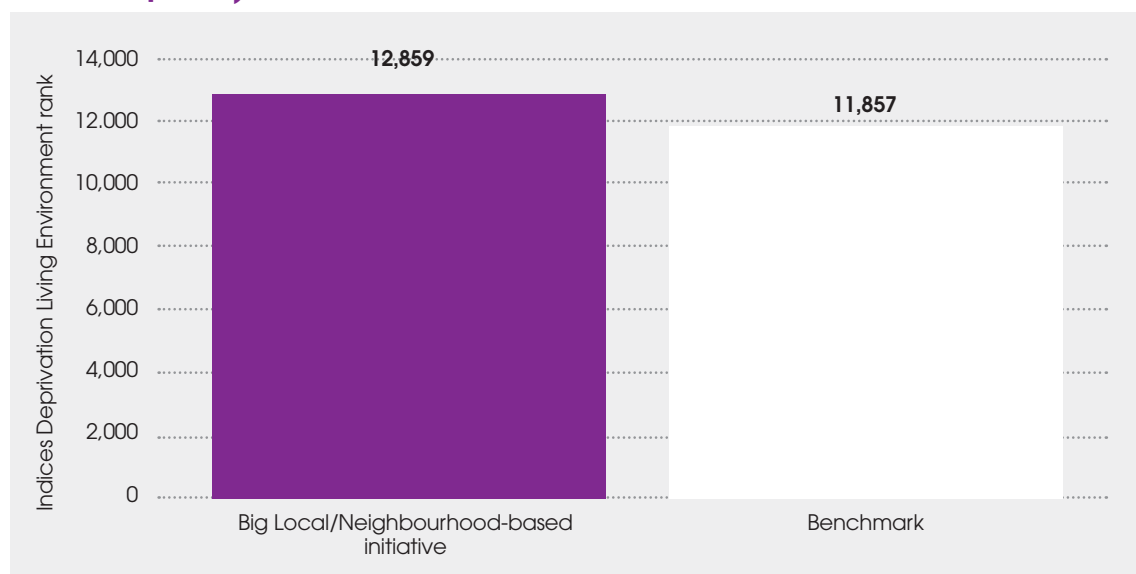
**Finding: Big Local/NBI areas generally have a better living environment than across benchmark areas.**

Figure 4 compares the average rank on the Indices of Deprivation 2019 'living environment' domain across Big Local/NBI areas and the benchmark areas. The 'living environment' domain measures deprivation relating to physical characteristics of the living environment. It consists of two sub-domains. The first

relates to the 'indoors' living environment and measures housing quality and housing without central heating. The second relates to the 'outdoors' living environment and measures air quality, and pedestrian and cyclist casualties resulting from road traffic accidents. (Note: a lower ranking indicates higher levels of deprivation.)

Big Local/NBI areas perform slightly better on environmental measures than the benchmark areas (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Indices of Deprivation 2019 Living Environment (average rank - where 1 is most deprived)**

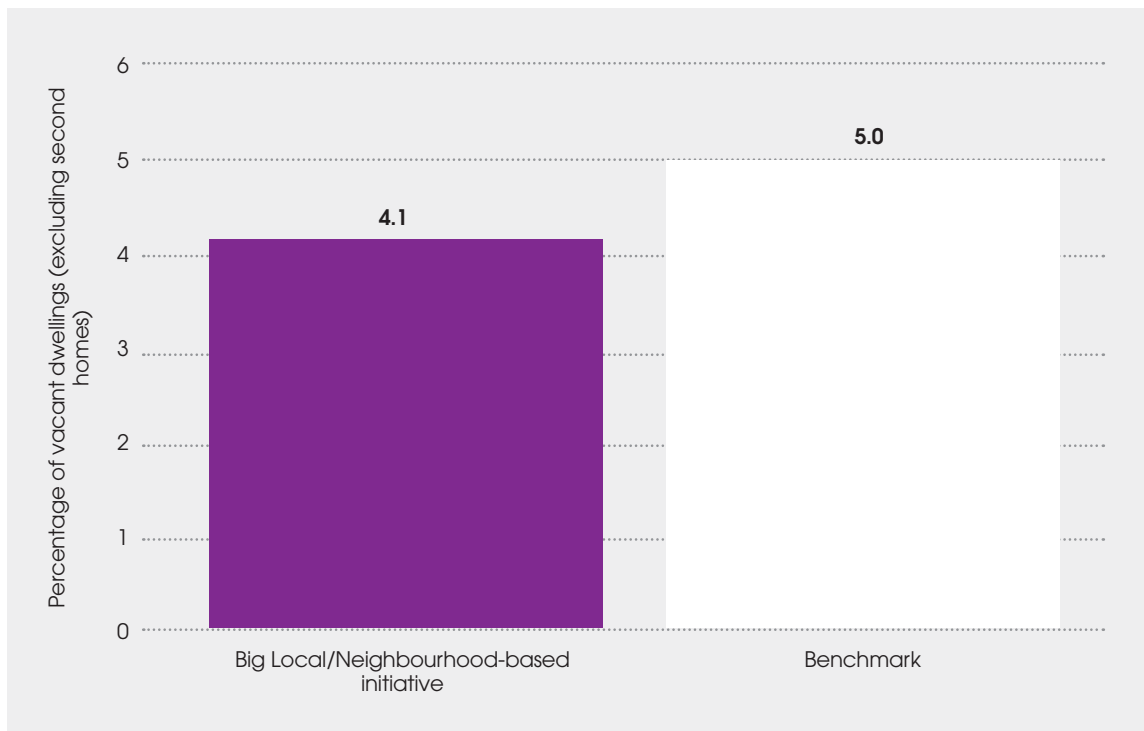


**Finding: Big Local/NBI areas are less likely to have empty homes than the benchmark areas.**

Figure 5 compares the proportion of household spaces that are vacant (excluding second homes) in Big Local/NBI

areas and benchmark areas. Big Local/NBI areas had a lower proportion of vacant households than their matched benchmark areas, with 4.1% of properties vacant in Big Local/NBI areas, compared with 5.0% in benchmark areas.

**Figure 5: Empty homes (excluding second homes)**



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# Self-reported strength of local community and social relationships

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The Community Life Survey (commissioned by DCMS, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) provides a range of data on the extent of volunteering, charitable giving, local action, community networks and wellbeing. These can be used to estimate the extent of social connectedness and active and engaged participation.

The sample size of this survey is insufficient to provide insights at below national level. However, in other research into the issues facing 'left behind' neighbourhoods we have developed an approach to apportion the data down to small-area level in order to compare the performance of such 'left behind' neighbourhoods and others on this indicator. The 2015/16 and 2017/18 iterations of the Community Life Survey are published with the associated Output Area Classification (OAC) of each respondent. Using the OAC, it is possible to apportion response rates to Output Area level by allocating response rates based on OAC group membership. Data is then aggregated from Output Area to provide estimated rates for key indicators for our Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas.

Table 2 compares selected response rates across Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas.

**Finding: People in Big Local/NBI areas were generally more likely to report strong social relationships than those living in areas without such interventions (ie the benchmark areas), however, levels of community participation were similar across both areas.**

Big Local/NBI areas outperform their matched benchmark areas on most of the key Community Life Survey indicators. This is particularly true for measures relating to the strength of local social relationships: Big Local/NBI areas outperform benchmark areas on six of the seven measures captured (with performance similar on the seventh). By contrast, levels of community participation are similar in Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas alike. However, it is important to note that this is modelled data from a national survey; much of the differences can be attributed to different social characteristics in these areas, rather than specific impacts of the Big Local/NBI programmes.



**Table 2: Self-reported Community Strength Indicators**

| <b>Strength of local social relationships</b>  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| Do not feel belong very strongly to neighbourhood  | 34.6 | 38.0 |
| Disagree that people borrow things or exchange favours with neighbours                                       | 54.7 | 59.4 |
| Never chat to neighbours   | 11.6 | 14.1 |
| Uncomfortable with asking a neighbour to mind your child(ren) for half an hour                               | 12.0 | 11.6 |
| Uncomfortable with asking a neighbour to keep a set of keys to your home for emergencies                     | 36.6 | 40.2 |
| Disagree that people in this area pull together to improve the neighbourhood                                 | 42.2 | 44.4 |
| Uncomfortable with asking a neighbour to collect a few shopping essentials if you were ill and at home alone | 44.4 | 47.2 |
| <b>Participation in community</b>  |      |      |
| Not taken part in community groups, clubs or organisations   | 21.0 | 20.7 |
| Not taken part in a consultation about local services or issues in your local area                           | 86.5 | 86.8 |
| Not been personally involved in helping out with local issue/activity  | 85.8 | 86.8 |

Key: Cells are shaded green to indicate higher Community Strength, cells are shaded red to indicate lower Community Strength and cells are shaded amber where levels are similar.

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# Community need

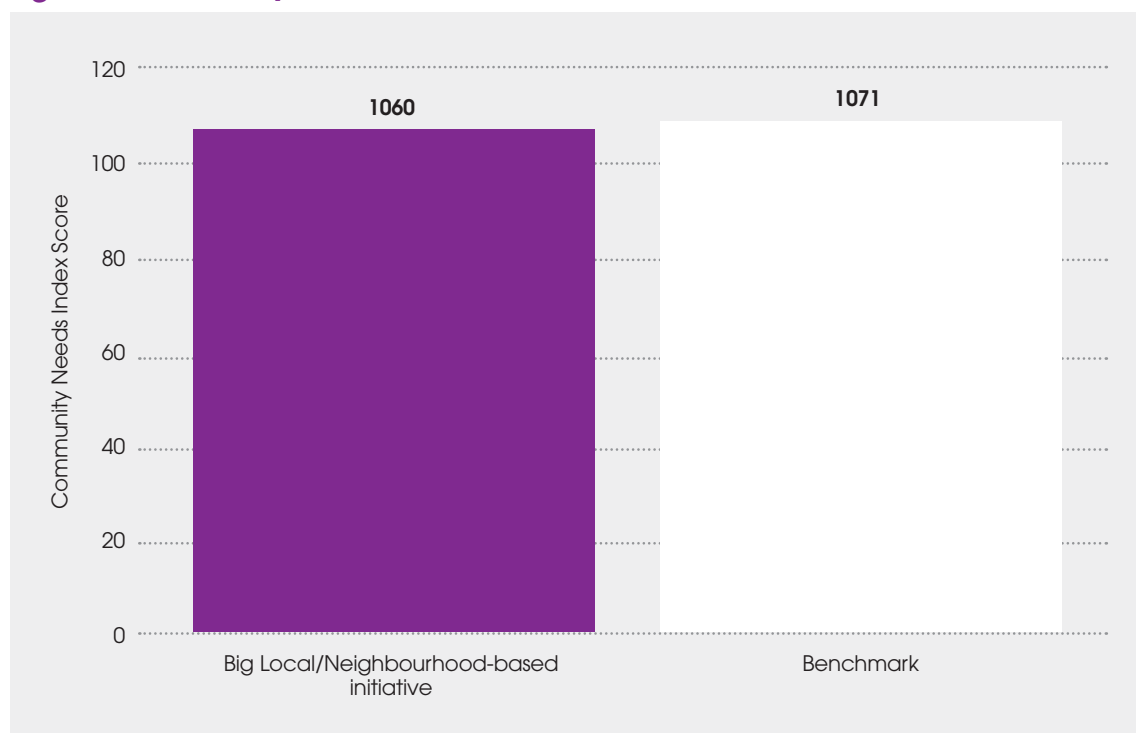
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The Community Needs Index was developed to identify areas experiencing social infrastructure challenges, conceptualised under three domains:

- Civic assets: Presence of key community, civic, educational and cultural assets in, and in close proximity to, the area.
- Connectedness: Connectivity to key services, digital infrastructure, isolation, and strength of the local jobs market.
- Active and engaged community: Levels of third sector, civic and community activity and barriers to participation and engagement.

Figure 6 compares the average rank on the Community Needs Index 2019 across Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas.

**Figure 6: Community Needs Index 2019 Score**

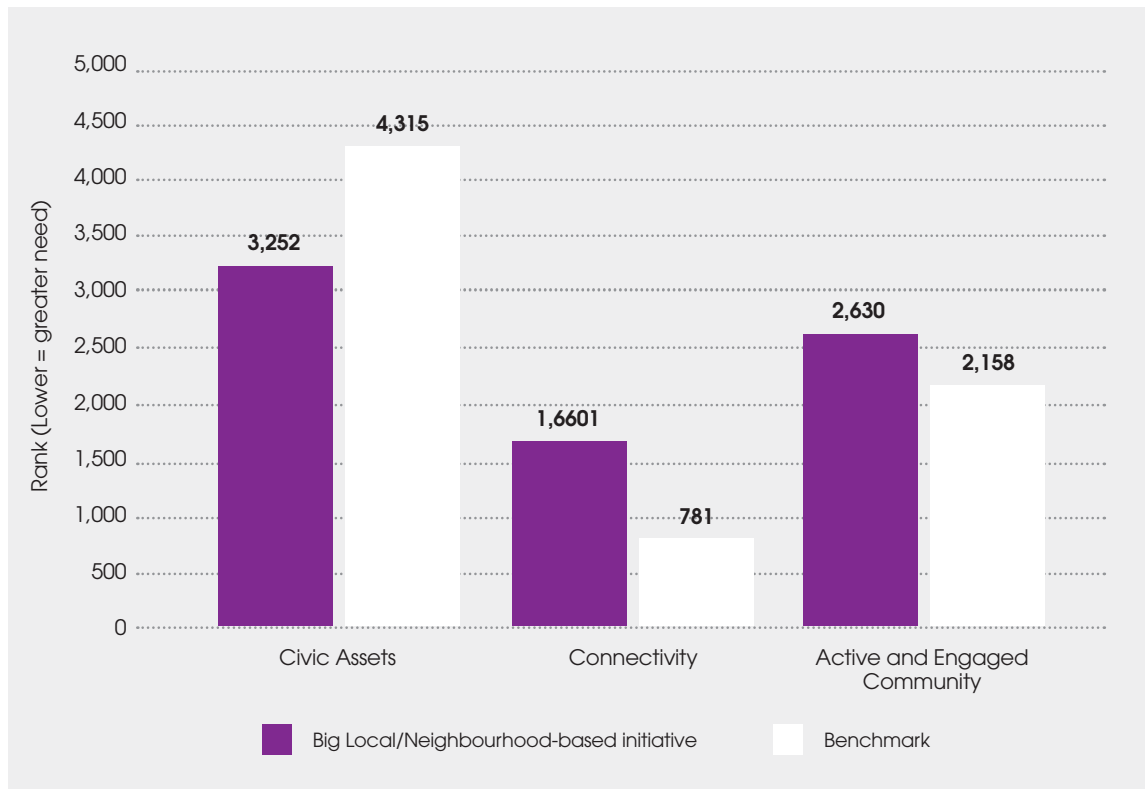


**Finding: Big Local/NBI areas and benchmark areas have similar levels of community need.**

However, drilling down to the component domains of the Community Need Index reveals a more nuanced picture (see Figure 7). Big Local/NBI areas perform particularly poorly on measures of 'civic assets' in comparison to benchmark areas, likely reflecting the fact that there are fewer community spaces in Big Local/NBI

areas. Conversely, performance on the 'active and engaged community' and 'connectivity' measures is better in the Big Local/NBI areas than across benchmark areas. This suggests that areas with Big Local/NBIs are more likely to have stronger outcomes on measures of community strength, participation and an active third sector, as well as stronger connectedness with key services and digital infrastructure.

**Figure 7: Community Needs Index domain ranks (where 1 = highest need) in Big Local/NBI areas and Benchmark areas**



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# Conclusion

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Big Local/NBI areas have generally lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, fewer empty homes, better overall living environments, and are generally more likely to report higher levels of neighbourliness, belonging and local participation than their comparative benchmark areas.

Based on the limited data we have been able to gather on liveability and community strength, there is some evidence to suggest that areas with Big Locals and other forms of neighbourhood-based working are performing better than those with no or limited neighbourhood working.

This is also reflected in the lower needs experienced on the 'active and engaged community' and 'connectivity' domains of the Community Needs Index. However, it

is important to consider these findings in the context of a relative paucity of robust measures of liveability at small-area level, and to note the lack of evidence about causality.

We would therefore recommend that the research be supplemented with further in-depth qualitative research to better understand the impact of resident-led neighbourhood-based locality working in these deprived neighbourhoods.

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# Case study 1: Resident-led neighbourhood working

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This report's definition of 'resident-led neighbourhood working' includes community initiatives at the neighbourhood level (spanning one to two wards) which are focused on improving local social, environmental or economic conditions through a combination of advocacy, representation, coordination and financial resources. Such resident-led working is distinguished from both professional-led and local government-led initiatives, in that the local community is empowered to take ownership of and lead responses to local issues.

## **Resident-led neighbourhood working in Eastern Sheppey**

Eastern Sheppey is located on the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey, an island on the north coast of Kent. It is made up of a cluster of small villages, including Warden, Eastchurch and the seaside resort of Leysdown-on-Sea, with a rich history as the birthplace of aviation in the UK. Eastern Sheppey is in the 5% most deprived areas in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019. The area is quite isolated as a result of poor transport links, with much of its local infrastructure only catering to seasonal tourists and visitors. There are limited job opportunities for local residents, high levels of household and child poverty, 38% of residents have no or low educational qualifications, and there is a limited number of places for the community to come together.

Because of these challenges, Eastern Sheppey was one of 150 communities to be given £1.15m as part of the Big Local programme. In contrast to conventional project-led funding, the Big Local funding awarded to Eastern Sheppey was provided on the basis that it would be spent over 10–15 years and directed according to the community's priorities and plans for their

area. To secure and direct the funding, a resident-led partnership of local volunteers worked together to form a common vision for their area and agree priorities. Meanwhile Local Trust provides flexible and responsive support: the aim is to help the community build the confidence and capacity to make the most of the opportunities available to them, without prescription or judgement on how their funds should be invested.

The £1.15m investment provided through the Big Local programme has facilitated a resident- and asset-led approach to tackling issues in the local community through Big Local Eastern Sheppey. Since 2012, the Big Local area has helped spark the resurgence of community life in the area, funding dozens of local groups, holiday play schemes, and numerous projects to help people into work, as well as tackling loneliness and improving mental health. The partnership has also collaborated with the local secondary school and other organisations on a Community Support Bus; this serves as a community pantry, which addresses high levels of local food poverty while also providing wraparound advice and support on debt and financial management.



In 2019, the resident-led partnership decided that the best way to ensure that projects could continue sustainably over the long term would be to establish a community hub, creating a central place for advice, drop-ins, groups and activities in the area. This was especially important as local services had been cut back in recent years, meaning that the area suffered from a lack of facilities open to the community. This was having a knock-on effect for community groups, parish councils and local business start-ups, which all lacked a suitable space to get up and running. A number of community groups needed to be bussed 'off island' to venues outside the area, providing a barrier for many locals to get involved.

With the support of Swale CVS, the Big Local partnership has bought and renovated the former police station as a community hub. This has recently opened to provide a vibrant multi-purpose community resource centre, including a walk-in community meeting place, an office, a counselling room, after-school and homework club, job club, storage for local groups (charities and commercial), and support for parents and children with their learning and development.

The Big Local partnership has also recognised that, as a rural community, they need to make sure that benefits accrued from the building are shared across the whole area. So the hub will also provide the 'spokes' or anchor to a range of mobile or satellite services to the surrounding area, making sure no one in Eastern Sheppey gets left behind. To ensure that activities and services were up and running once the doors of the community hub opened, the partnership trialled a number of projects that will be based in the building. These have proved to be a huge success and include a mobile 'coffee and cake' caravan to tackle loneliness and isolation, a youth activity club for 10-14 year olds, and a befriending club for older residents.

But the partnership also recognises that the local community needs to decide what works for them. Although activities may evolve and adapt to residents' needs over time, what is important is that the hub will be an asset that can be counted on in the future.

In the words of one partnership member, "We are leaving something behind that is valuable and will be used in years to come and that is what's important."

## Outcomes

There is evidence to suggest resident-led neighbourhood working in Eastern Sheppey has helped to strengthen the community. Eastern Sheppey has a more active and engaged community compared to the average across neighbourhoods in England. Modelling responses to the Community Life Survey down to local level also indicates that Eastern Sheppey has higher rates of reported belonging, stronger social relationships and greater satisfaction with the local area than the national average; this finding is echoed in feedback from those involved in the Big Local programme, who underscored the strength of local community spirit.

Eastern Sheppey performs better than neighbouring wards on key indicators of community strength, as measured by the Community Needs Index. While there is a clear divide between the local economic context of both areas, neighbouring Sheerness – a former naval and port town – benefits from some locality-based initiatives but does not have the same history of resident-led neighbourhood working. Comparatively, Eastern Sheppey achieves a 'connectivity' score of 813 compared to 547 in nearby Sheerness, and an 'active and engaged community' score of 2,181 compared to 1,701 in Sheerness. Recorded crime levels are also lower and anti-social behaviour appears to have been declining at a faster rate (175.5 total crime



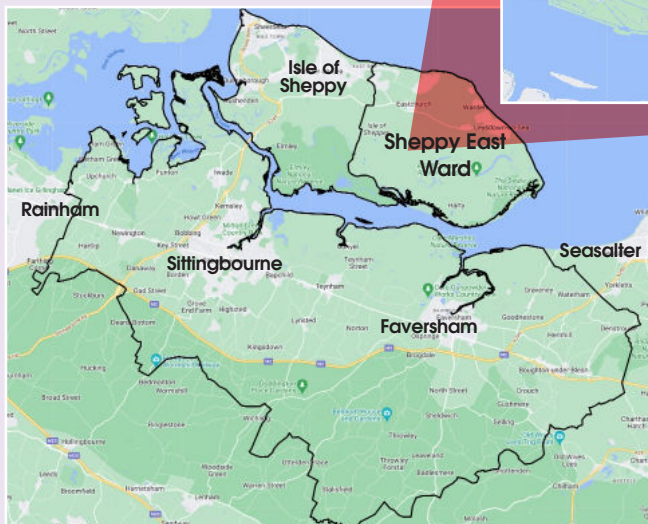
offences per 1,000 population (September 2020-August 2021) compared to 214.6 in Sheerness).

Significantly, responses to the Community Life Survey in Eastern Sheppey outperform Sheerness on all key indicators testing community cohesion – with less than half as many people answering that they would “never chat to a neighbour”, fewer responding that they “Do not feel belong very strongly to their neighbourhood” (29.8% compared to 26.8%), and a lower proportion of people feeling that they have not been “personally involved in helping out with local issue/activity” (81.8 compared to 87.1). Additionally, Eastern Sheppey has a lower number of empty homes – with a score of 6.1 compared to 5.2 – further signalling a higher level of community

strength, permanence and cohesion.

**The power of equipping residents with the tools and resources to enact positive change in their areas is clear to see. Resident-led neighbourhood-based working in Eastern Sheppey has facilitated an array of successful interventions addressing local needs relating to social infrastructure, activities and food poverty. But beyond this, the research also indicates that such resident-led neighbourhood-based working can create stronger, better connected and more resilient communities.**

**Swale Borough Council, Kent, and the ward of Sheppey East**



**Sheppey East ward**



Pages 22 & 24

2022 ONS ward boundaries

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# Case study 2: Professional-led neighbourhood working in Little Horton

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This report's definition of professional-led neighbourhood working includes schemes operating at the neighbourhood level (spanning one to two wards) with one or more paid professionals employed by a public body or community organisation, with a remit to advocate for the needs of the community and take practical action to co-ordinate public service provision and deliver community engagement or community development activity.

As a former 'New Deal for Communities' (NDC) area, Little Horton – a ward located in Bradford East – has a strong history of neighbourhood management. 'Bradford Trident', the NDC-legacy organisation, still operates as the community anchor, alongside other strong civic institutions such as 'Better Start Bradford' (funded by the National Lottery Community Fund) and the Community Council. Notably, Little Horton is also covered by the Bradford Metropolitan District Council's 'ward-based working' initiative; a hyper-local, joined-up approach to the delivery of services and initiatives aimed at improving liveability. This sees ward officers work alongside local councillors, partner agencies, voluntary, community and faith organisations, and residents to identify and deliver against local priorities.

## Outcomes

### Building pride in place

Ward officers have worked at the hyper-local level, with a steering group of residents, local authority representatives, businesses and community organisations, to deliver a 'BD5 in Bloom' initiative aimed at boosting pride in place and encouraging community-led initiatives to improve the local environment. This has evolved to become an annual contest for the development of local green spaces, including residential gardens. To ensure accessibility and encourage wider participation, a mapping exercise was completed to identify common green spaces with scope for improvement, and a team of volunteer residents were brought together to increase community engagement. The council have also supported the development of voluntary and community sector led growing spaces, such as the West Bowling Centre and Shine@St Stephens, and have subsidised day trips outside the Bradford area to build interest in gardening and horticulture. Community participation has been on the rise, with the scheme successfully improving local civic pride, the visual appeal of the local environment, and helping to tackle issues such as fly-tipping.

## Tackling anti-social behaviour

Ward officers have also partnered with the community to reduce anti-social behaviour through a joined-up, 'community calming' exercise, originally piloted in the BD3 area and expanded to BD5, which covers Little Horton. The initiative was organised around Bonfire Night, an event which had traditionally attracted high levels of anti-social behaviour and crime.

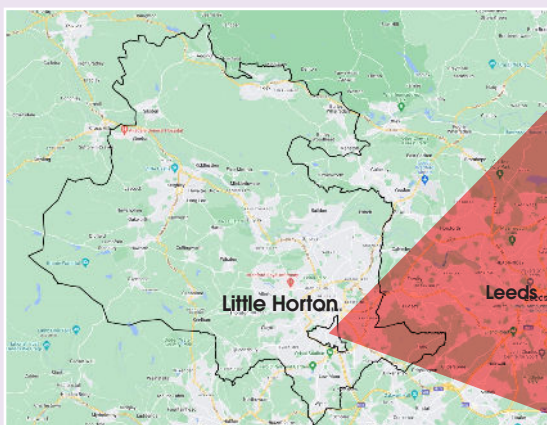
## Bradford East Bonfire Response Boundaries Little Horton 2022



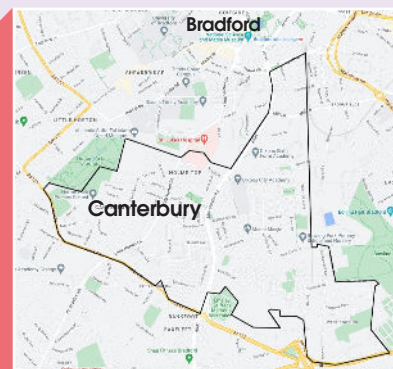
In the run up to the annual event, key messaging and outreach was conducted via schools and other local networks; this aimed to disincentivise anti-social behaviour. On the night itself, resident volunteer 'community calmers' patrolled hotspots and shared intelligence with the council and police via WhatsApp groups. Meanwhile faith-based organisations, teachers and local voluntary groups delivered diversionary activities in community hubs, funded by the council, aimed at engaging young people. The close liaison between 'community calmers' and local services – including the fire and police services – proved critical to deploying appropriate responses to potential incidents and mitigating tensions.

**Both of these neighbourhood initiatives have proven particularly successful on the basis of their strength-based approach to fostering pride in place and deterring crime, utilising existing community assets and networks to ensure community ownership and buy-in to initiatives aimed at improving local liveability. Professional-led neighbourhood working in Little Horton is helping to build a more cohesive, connected community, as seen in key initiatives aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour and building pride in place.**

## Boundary of Bradford City Council, with Little Horton ward inset



## Little Horton ward





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# Appendix A: Identifying areas to use in the study

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The approach we have taken is to compare the performance of a sample of highly deprived wards where neighbourhood-based working is established, on key indicators of liveability and community need, benchmarked against similarly deprived wards which do not have such interventions.

The starting point was to identify a set of wards with deprivation challenges where the Big Local programme was in operation. The Big Local programme is the largest resident-led neighbourhood initiative currently in operation in England.

Wards were selected if they ranked as highly deprived on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 and had a Big Local programme operating in all or part of the ward. In order to ensure that the wards selected were drawn from a diverse set of neighbourhoods, each of the Big Local wards were also classified into neighbourhood categories based on the predominant socio-economic characteristics and economic function of the wider area. Areas were classified into five neighbourhood categories:

- 1) Coastal communities
- 2) Out of town housing estates
- 3) Inner city areas
- 4) Former mining communities
- 5) Rural/small towns

In the first phase of the research, one Big Local ward<sup>1</sup> was selected from each of these five categories.

The next step was to identify a set of potential benchmark areas with which to compare these Big Local areas. A long-list of potential benchmark areas was pulled together by identifying wards with similar socio-demographic characteristics and deprivation levels as the Big Local wards. Every ward in England was grouped into the five neighbourhood types, and a subset of wards from each category was selected, where they matched the deprivation levels of the Big Local wards (using the Indices of Deprivation 2019 to identify relative levels of deprivation).

However, we are aware that areas with similar levels of deprivation may differ in terms of demographic breakdowns and characteristics. To account for this, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Output Area Classification (OAC) 2011 was used to identify areas with shared characteristics. The OAC is a geo-demographic classification developed by the ONS to group Output Areas into one of 26 Typology Group categories based on their responses to multiple census 2011 questions on demographics, employment, health, housing, skills, etc. Each of the selected Big Local wards was assigned two potential benchmark areas which were matched as closely as possible in terms of IMD 2019 score and OAC composition.

<sup>1</sup> In order to enable comparison on the Community Needs Index (in the subsequent stages), 2017 wards have been used in this analysis. Where ward boundaries have changed since 2020 we have also supplied the name (and code of the 2020 ward with the co-terminus boundary for reference).

The wards were selected in two waves. Five Big Local areas (each with two potential benchmark areas) were selected in Wave 1 in 2021. These were supplemented with a further 11 Big Local areas and 11 benchmark areas in Wave 2, in order to boost the sample of areas used in the research. In total, 27 wards have been identified.

Shared Intelligence then conducted extensive qualitative analysis of the 21 potential 'benchmark areas' to determine the extent to which neighbourhood-based initiatives are in operation. The extent of neighbourhood-level interventions varied considerably across these areas. However, it was possible to identify both areas with some evidence of either resident- or professional-led neighbourhood interventions and areas with no evidence of neighbourhood working.

Big Local areas with no matching counterfactual benchmark areas were subsequently removed from the analysis. Following these steps, 24 wards were used in the study – highlighted in the table below.

For the purposes of the primary analysis, the Big Local and other resident-led neighbourhood initiatives and professional-led neighbourhood initiatives were combined together to produce an overall 'treatment group'. These were then matched against the benchmark wards in the analysis.

**Table 3 shows the 24 wards featured in the study**

|                               |  |  |                              |
|-------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| Coastal communities           | Sidley, Newington, Harbour                 | Weston-super-Mare South, Weston-super-Mare Central | Melcombe Regis, Sandhill     |
| Housing estates (out of town) | Northwood, Smith's Wood                    | Orchard Park and Greenwood                         | Brambles & Thorntree, County |
| Inner city areas              | Lozells and East Handsworth, Wycliffe      | Little Horton                                      | Picton, St Matthew's         |
| Former mining communities     | Woodhouse Close, Ewanrigg                  | De Bruce   | Shirebrook North West        |
| Rural/small towns             | Sheppey East, West Clacton & Jaywick Sands |  | Sheerness                    |

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# Appendix B: Comparing resident-led and professional-led neighbourhood working

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In this section, we compare the performance of areas with resident-led neighbourhood working against those with professional-led neighbourhood working models. Groups have been classified into Type A areas, where neighbourhood working is resident-led, and Type B, where working is professional-led.

## Different types of neighbourhood working

### TYPE A:

- **Big Local**
- **Other resident-led models** – our definition includes community initiatives which are at the one to two ward(s) scale, and focused on improving social, environmental, or economic conditions in the area through a combination of advocacy, representation, coordination and financial resources.

### TYPE B:

- **Professional-led models** – our definition includes initiatives often described as 'locality' or 'neighbourhood management' schemes which operate at the one to two ward(s) scale with one or more paid professionals, employed by a public body or community organisation, with a remit to advocate for the needs of the community, take practical action to coordinate public service provision, and deliver community engagement or community development activity.
- **Parish Council models** – our definition includes Parish Council models, where they operate at the one to two ward(s) scale and where Parish officers (e.g. Parish Clerks) are actively involved in advocacy and practical action focused on an area with a one to two ward(s) scale.
- **Community Chest models** – our definition includes initiatives with ongoing local small grants initiatives, organised by paid staff, focused on the one to two ward(s) scale.

**Geographic and population scale:** The definition relates specifically to initiatives with a geographic scale equivalent to between one and two local authority electoral wards or a Super Output Areas. Typically this would mean a population of 5-10,000 residents. In an urban setting this would be an area which could be walked across in 10-15 minutes, or 15-30 minutes in a rural or semi-rural area.

**Timescale:** The definition relates specifically to initiatives which have been operating continuously for 10 years (i.e. a comparable time frame to Big Local).

Table B.1 shows the wards selected for each of the five neighbourhood categories.

|                           |   |  |                              |
|---------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|
|                           |   |  |                              |
| Coastal communities       | Sidley, Newington, Harbour                | Weston-super-Mare South, Weston-super-Mare Central | Melcombe Regis, Sandhill     |
| Housing estates           | Northwood, Smith's Wood                   | Orchard Park and Greenwood                         | Brambles & Thorntree, County |
| Inner city areas          | Lozells and East Handsworth, Wycliffe     | Little Horton                                      | Picton, St Matthew's         |
| Former mining communities | Woodhouse Close, Ewanrigg                 | De Bruce   | Shirebrook North West        |
| Rural/Small towns         | Sheppey East/West Clacton & Jaywick Sands |  | Sheerness                    |

1) TYPE A (Big Local/Resident-led)

2) TYPE B (Professional-led/Parish Council/Community Chest)

3) Benchmark areas.

#### A note on the areas selected:

We have included Sheerness despite some evidence of recent neighbourhood working in the form of Sheerness Town Council, which was inaugurated in May 2019.<sup>2</sup> This was included as evidence of neighbourhood working in this area relatively recently (largely predating the data used in the analysis).

In this report we compare the performance of Type A and Type B wards against benchmark wards (those with shared deprivation and socio-demographic characteristics but which showed no evidence of NBIs or neighbourhood working).

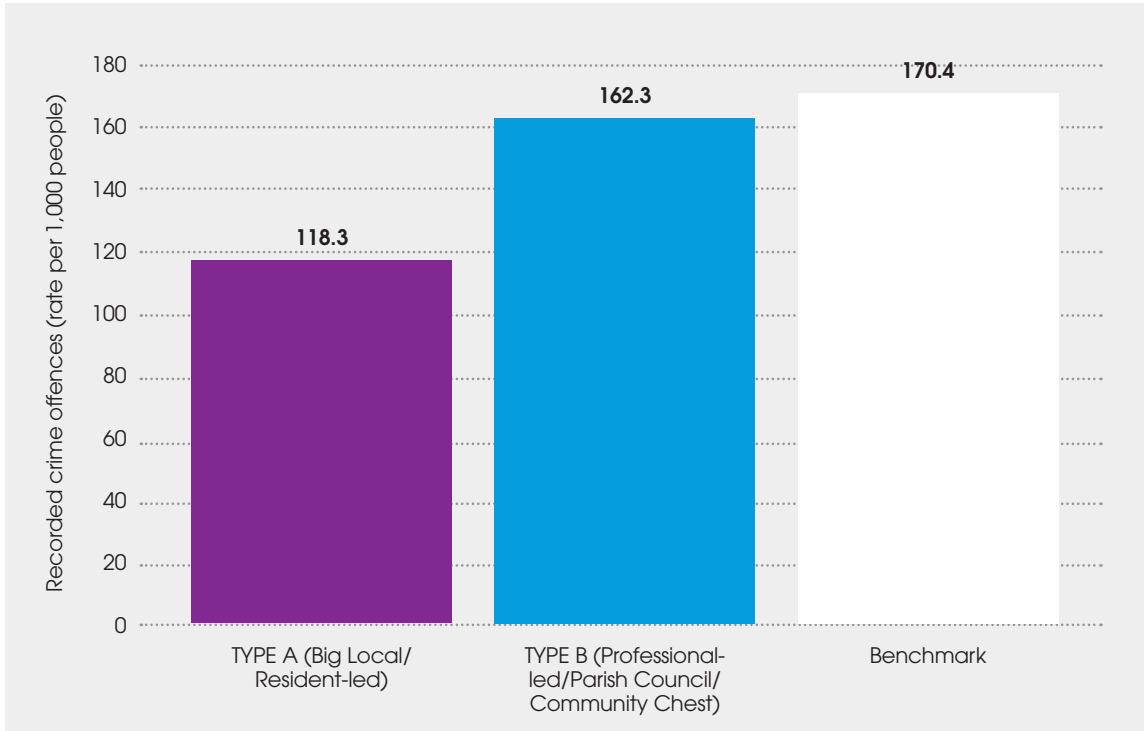
These three sets of areas are compared on a series of key indicators relating to neighbourhood liveability and economy which are grouped into the following themes:

1. Crime and anti-social behaviour
2. Neighbourhood environment (including empty homes)
3. Stronger local social relationships (such as connections between neighbours)
4. Community need

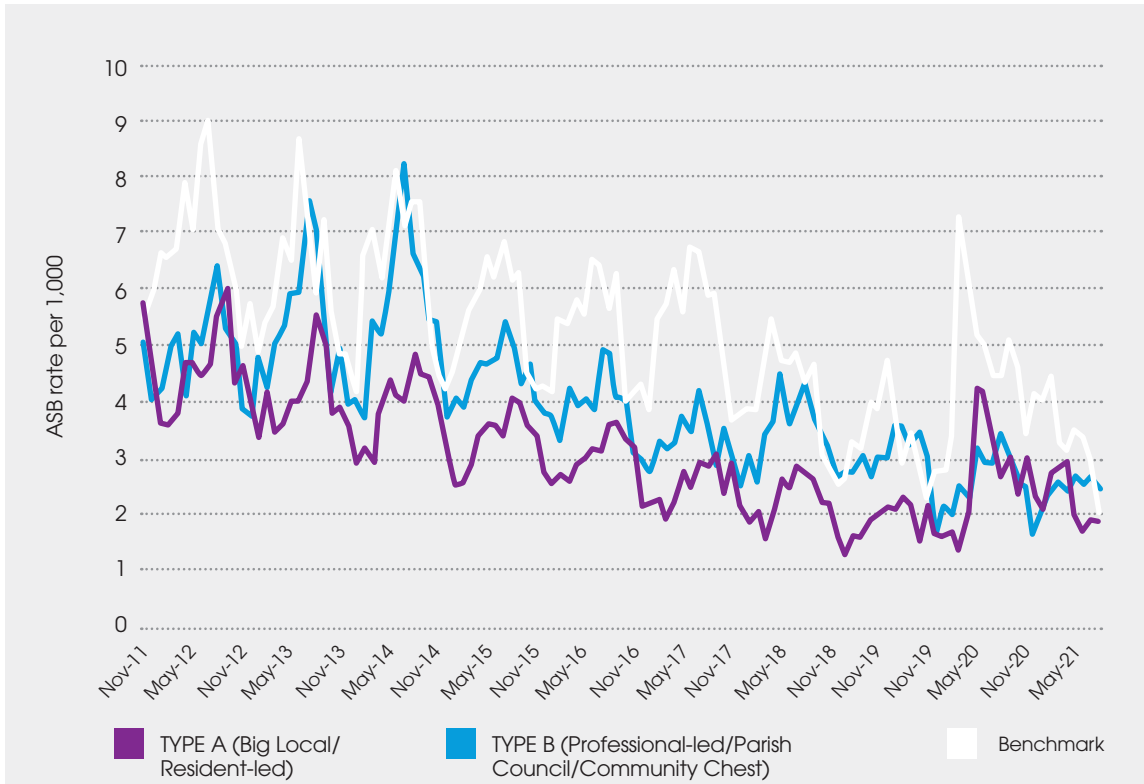
<sup>2</sup> <https://sheerness-tc.co.uk/>

<https://sheerness-tc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/STC-Full-Council-Minutes-20.05.19.pdf>

**Figure B.1: Total crime offences (rate per 1,000 population): Sep-21 to Aug-22 - Big Local/NBI areas and Benchmark areas**

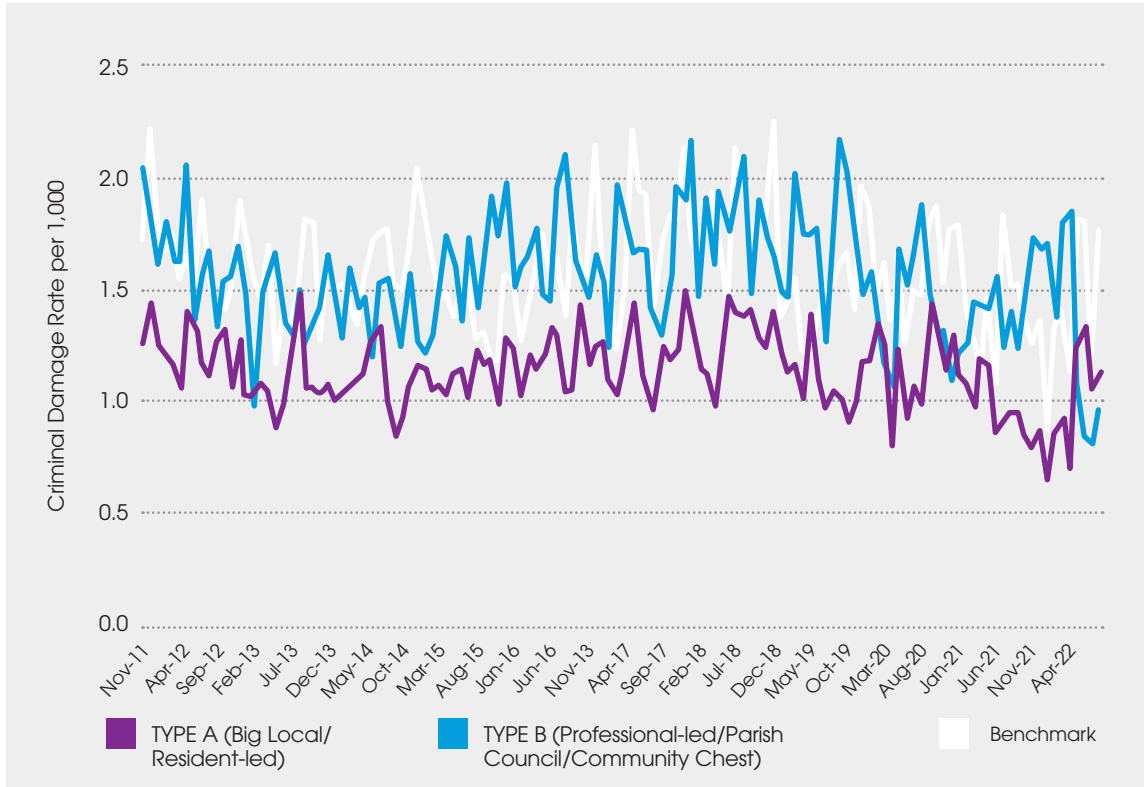


**Figure B.2: Anti-social behaviour offences (rate per 1,000 people) between 2011 and 2022**



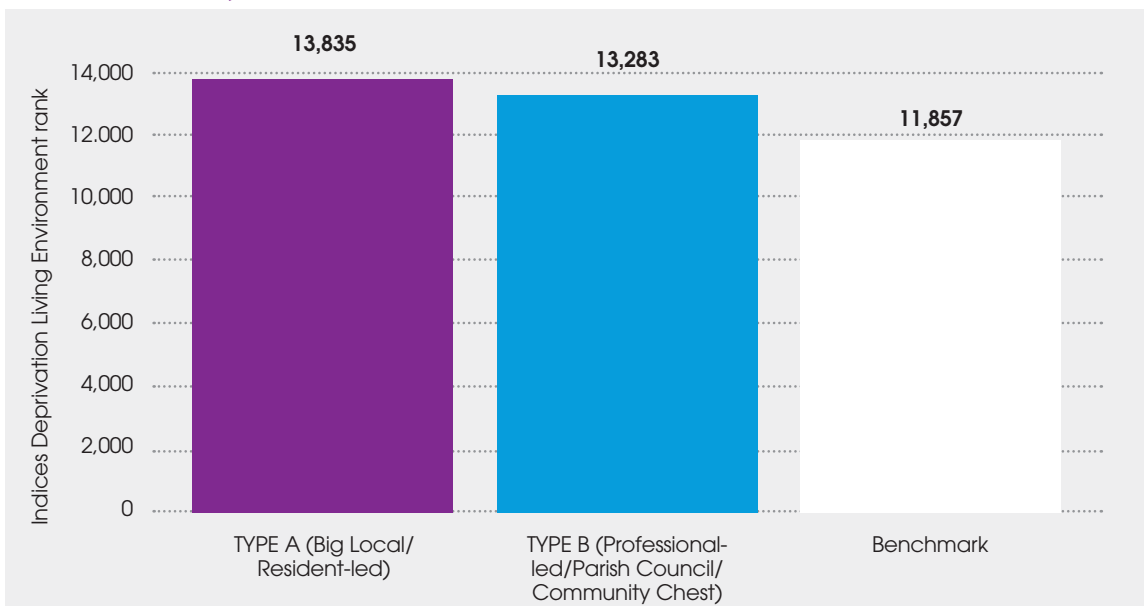


**Figure B.3: Criminal Damage offences (rate per 1,000 people) between 2011 and 2022**

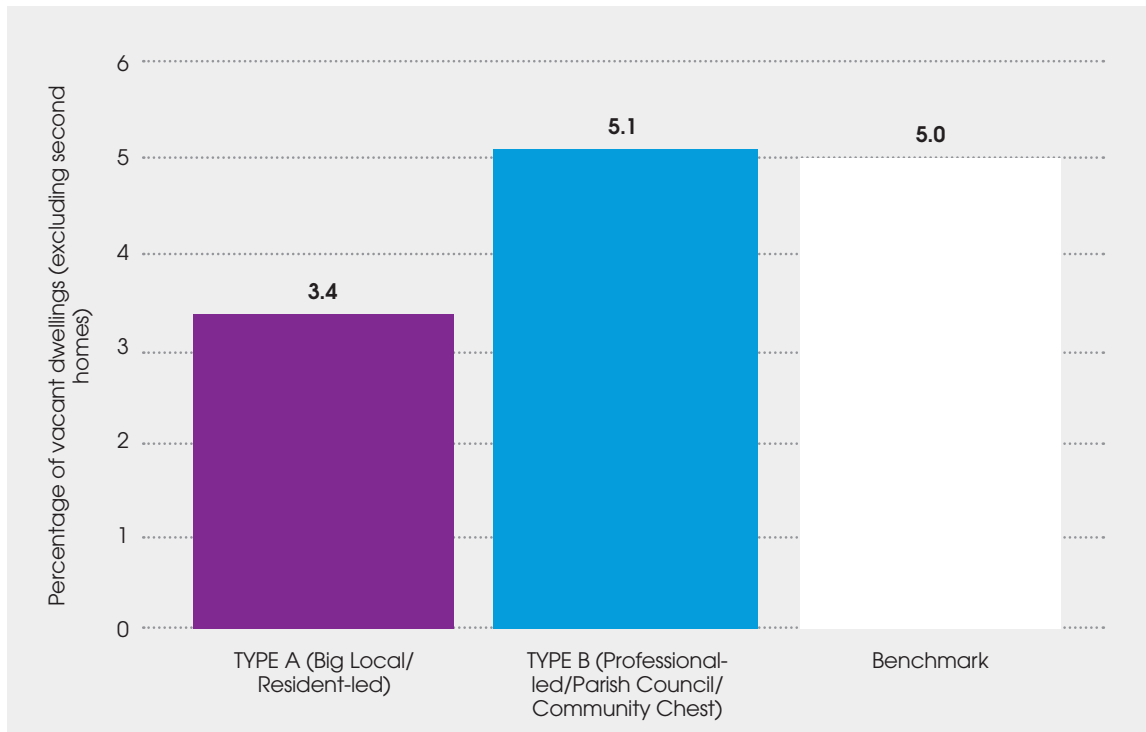


**Neighbourhood environment**

**Figure B.4: Indices of Deprivation 2019 Living Environment (average rank - where 1 is most deprived)**



**Figure B.5: Empty homes (excluding second homes)**



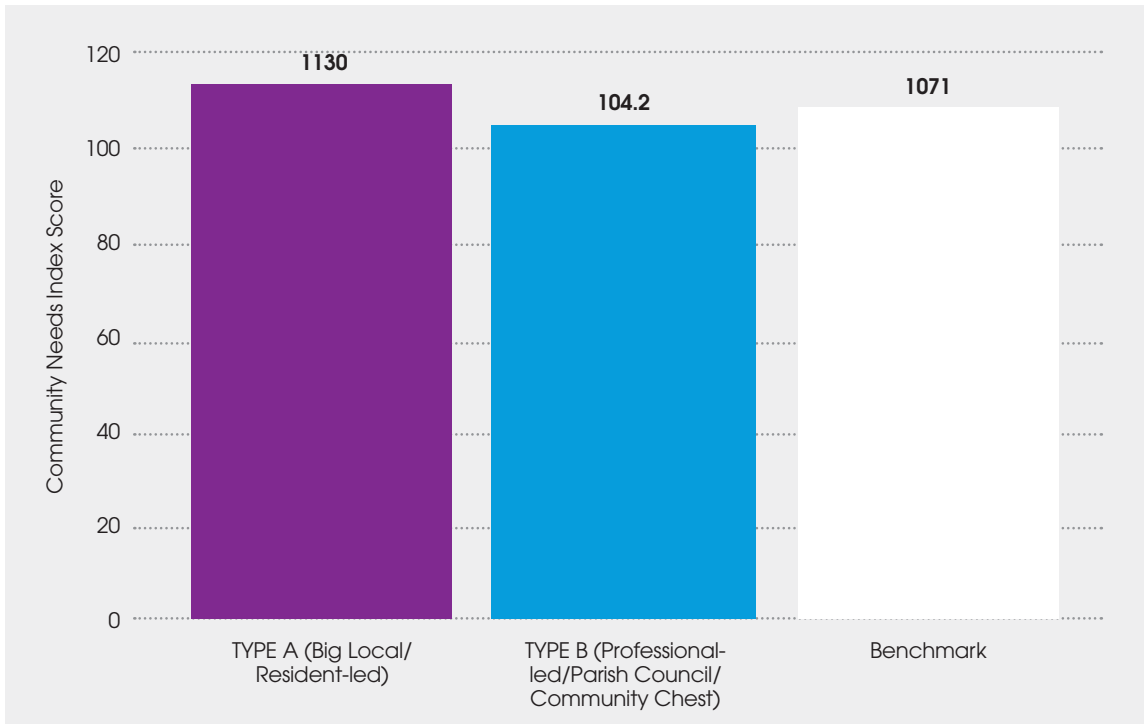
## Stronger local social relationships (such as connections between neighbours)

**Figure B.6: Self-reported Community Strength Indicators**

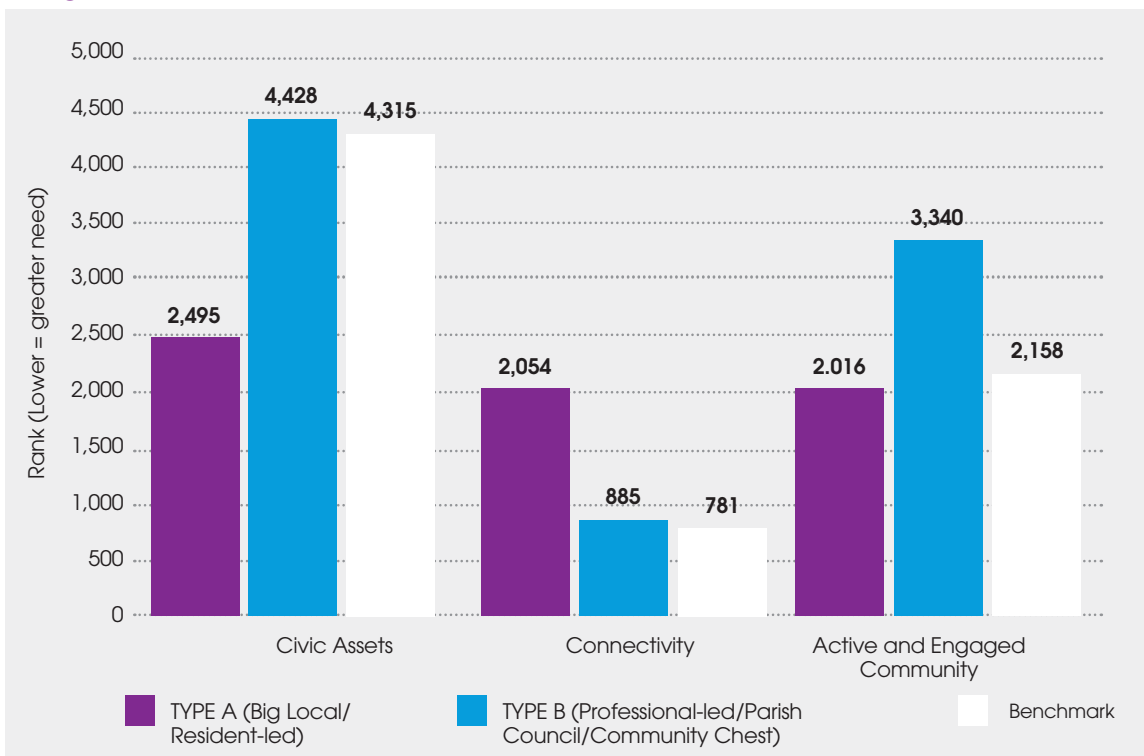
| <b>Strength of local social relationships</b>  |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|
| Do not feel belong very strongly to neighbourhood  | 34.5 | 34.9 | 38.0 |
| Disagree that borrow things or exchange favours with neighbours  | 54.8 | 55.1 | 59.4 |
| Never chat to neighbours   | 11.5 | 11.6 | 14.1 |
| Uncomfortable with asking a neighbour to mind your child(ren) for half an hour                               | 11.8 | 12.4 | 11.6 |
| Uncomfortable with asking a neighbour to keep a set of keys to your home for emergencies                     | 36.3 | 37.0 | 40.2 |
| Disagree that people in this area pull together to improve the neighbourhood                                 | 41.7 | 43.7 | 44.4 |
| Uncomfortable with asking a neighbour to collect a few shopping essentials if you were ill and at home alone | 43.8 | 45.2 | 47.2 |
| <b>Participation in community</b>  |      |      |      |
| Not taken part in community groups, clubs or organisations   | 20.7 | 21.7 | 20.7 |
| Not taken part in a consultation about local services or issues in your local area                           | 86.5 | 86.9 | 86.8 |
| Not been personally involved in helping out with local issue/activity  | 85.7 | 86.1 | 86.8 |

## Community need

**Figure B.7: Community Needs Index 2019 Score - Big Local/NBI areas and Benchmark areas**



**Figure B.8: Community Needs Index domain ranks (where 1 = highest need) in Big Local/NBI areas and Benchmark areas**



# Appendix C: Indicators used in the report

|                       |   |                  |                  |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|------------------|
| Community Needs Index | <p>The Community Needs Index was developed to identify areas experiencing poor community and civic infrastructure, relative isolation, and low levels of participation in community life. The Index was created by combining a series of 19 indicators, conceptualised under three domains: Civic Assets, Connectedness, and Active and Engaged Community. A higher score indicates that an area has higher levels of community need.</p>   | 2019             | OCSI/Local Trust |
| Total crime offences  | <p>12-month total of neighbourhood-level incidents of criminal offences, and as a rate per 1,000 residents. The incidents were located to the point at which they occurred and allocated to the appropriate output area and lower super output area (LSOA). \</p> <p>Rate calculated as = (Total offences)/(Total population)*1000\</p> <p>Note: Police.uk crime counts were not recorded for Greater Manchester Police due to a change in IT systems: no crime, outcome or stop-and-search data is available from July 2019 onwards. Please see <a href="https://data.police.uk/changelog/">https://data.police.uk/changelog/</a> for more details. Please note that the raw data we have loaded in is published at small area level, therefore the data showing at local authority or a higher level has been aggregated from smaller geographies.</p>                      | Sep-21 to Aug-22 | Police-uk        |
| Anti-social behaviour | <p>12-month total of neighbourhood-level incidents of anti-social behaviour, and as a rate per 1,000 residents. The incidents were located to the point at which they occurred and allocated to the appropriate output area and lower super output area (LSOA). \</p> <p>Rate calculated as = (Anti-social behaviour offences)/(Total population)*1000 \</p> <p>Note: Police.uk crime counts were not recorded for Greater Manchester Police due to a change in IT systems: no crime, outcome or stop-and-search data is available from July 2019 onwards. Please see <a href="https://data.police.uk/changelog/">https://data.police.uk/changelog/</a> for more details. Please note that the raw data we have loaded in is published at small area level, therefore the data showing at local authority or a higher level has been aggregated from smaller geographies.</p> | Sep-21 to Aug-22 | Police-uk        |



|                             |  |                  |           |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------|-----------|
| Criminal Damage             | <p>12-month total of neighbourhood-level incidents of criminal damage, and as a rate per 1,000 residents. Criminal damage is defined from the National Crime Recording System codes for this type of crime. The incidents were located to the point at which they occurred and allocated to the appropriate output area and lower super output area (LSOA). \</p> <p>Rate calculated as = (Criminal damage and arson offences)/(Total population)*1000 \</p> <p>Note: Police.uk crime counts were not recorded for Greater Manchester Police due to a change in IT systems: no crime, outcome or stop-and-search data is available from July 2019 onwards. Please see <a href="https://data.police.uk/changelog/">https://data.police.uk/changelog/</a> for more details. Please note that the raw data we have loaded in is published at small area level, therefore the data showing at local authority or a higher level has been aggregated from smaller geographies.</p>  | Sep-21 to Aug-22 | Police-uk |
| IoD 2019 Living Environment | <p>The Indices of Deprivation (IoD) 2019 Living Environment Deprivation Domain measures the quality of the local environment. The indicators fall into two sub-domains. The 'indoors' living environment measures the quality of housing; the 'outdoors' living environment contains measures of air quality and road traffic accidents. The Indoors sub-domain contains the following indicators: Houses without central heating: The proportion of houses that do not have central heating; Housing in poor condition: The proportion of social and private homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes standard. The Outdoors sub-domain contains the following indicators: Air quality: A measure of air quality based on emissions rates for four pollutants; Road traffic accidents involving injury to pedestrians and cyclists: A measure of road traffic accidents involving injury to pedestrians and cyclists among the resident and workplace population. Data shows Average LSOA Rank, a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing high levels of deprivation.</p> | 2019             | MHCLG     |

|   |  |                            |   |
|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| <p>Percentage of all dwellings that are vacant (excluding second homes and holiday homes)</p> | <p>Proportion of all dwellings that are vacant in an area, excluding second homes and holiday homes. This data is an estimate of vacant dwellings in 2017 at Output Area level and is based on Local Authority level estimates of vacant dwellings for 2017, Census 2011 household spaces with no residents, and Census 2001 vacant dwellings. Local authority level 2017 estimates are drawn from several separately published sources including all vacants and long-term vacants from the Council Tax Base (CTB), Local Authority vacants and Other public sector vacants from the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) and Private Registered Provider (housing association) vacants and long-term vacants from the 2012 Homes and Communities Agency's Statistical Data return (SDR), see here for more information: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685575/LT_615.xls">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685575/LT_615.xls</a>.</p> <p>Census 2011 data is based on a record of households with no residents from the table KS401EW Dwellings, household spaces and accommodation type <a href="https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks401ew">https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks401ew</a>.</p> <p>Census 2001 data is based on a record of housing stock that is categorised as a vacant household space or second residence/holiday accommodation, from the table UV053 Housing stock <a href="https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2001/uv053">https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2001/uv053</a>.</p> | <p>2017</p>                |   |
| <p>Civic participation (Self-reported measures of community and civic participation)</p>      | <p>The Community Life Survey contains key indicators of volunteering and civic participation. Two key indicators from the survey have been apportioned down to the Output Area level based on the responses to the questions: Have you undertaken any formal or informal volunteering in the last 12 months?; Whether taken part in any civic engagement? The apportioning approach involved looking at responses at Output Area Classification group level (linked to the survey) and allocating response rates (%) to each Output Area based on their Output Area Classification group membership. Two years of data were used to increase the size of the response rate.</p>  | <p>2015/16 and 2017/18</p> | <p>Community Life Survey: DCMS/ Output Area Classification 2011: ONS Licensed data - access via UK data archive <a href="https://www.data-archive.ac.uk/">https://www.data-archive.ac.uk/</a></p> |

**Local Trust**



Shared Intelligence

