



national network  
for neighbourhood  
improvement

Local Trust  
trusting  
local  
people

# Neighbourhoods in action

## Achieving big results by working hyper-locally

A landscape review of local  
government's work supporting  
communities at the neighbourhood level

Ben Lee, Manav Gupta and Thea Durdy  
October 2024



Shared Intelligence





**national network  
for neighbourhood  
improvement**

### **About 3ni**

The national network for neighbourhood improvement is a new learning network for local government hosted by Local Trust that supports local authority policy and practice towards community-led regeneration.

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### **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.

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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: Big Local area: Heart of Sidley (festival, June 2024)  
Photographer: Kerrie Wood Photography



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# Foreword

by Matt Leach and Dan Crowe

**Where we live – the streets, estates, and neighbourhoods that we call home – has a profound effect on our health, wealth and wellbeing.**

We know this from our experience at Local Trust of overseeing the Big Local programme – England’s biggest and boldest example of place-based, resident-led change. Over the past 12 years we have seen at first hand the transformational power of what happens when communities – in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the county – are supported and resourced over the long-term to take action on the issues that matter most to them.

Many of the most compelling examples of place-based change have been when local people uncover and harness the assets, insights, skills and aspirations for their local area, working in partnership with local government and other statutory partners to effect meaningful and sustainable change. Local councils and communities working together improves outcomes for individuals and households, neighbourhoods and local government alike. Representative and participatory democracy in action.

The issues facing those communities most in need of community capacity building and targeted support – that Local Trust has identified as lacking the essential social infrastructure that those of us living in better connected and more affluent neighbourhoods often take for granted – can be wicked, complex and increasingly entrenched.

As local leaders, strategic place-shapers, and public service commissioners, local authorities are at the frontline of grappling with many of these challenges, facing on a daily basis their impact and consequences, from spiralling costs to growing demands on services. While bearing the brunt of over a decade of cuts and austerity, local government has worked hard to protect their most vulnerable residents and support their most deprived communities, and this report uncovers some of the ways that local government is doing this vital and important work, achieving big results by working at the hyper-local level.

At Local Trust and 3ni we’re working to understand how we can best support local government and partners across the public sector in working at the neighbourhood level, and what is needed in terms of policy and practice to strengthen community-led efforts at regeneration and renewal.

As well as informing the work of our peer-learning network, 3ni, this report will be submitted as evidence to ICON<sup>1</sup>, the independent commission on neighbourhoods, set up to explore and help address the significant challenges faced by those communities most in need of targeted investment, support and resources.

**Matt Leach, CEO of Local Trust**  
**Dan Crowe, 3ni**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.neighbourhoodscommission.org.uk>

# Executive summary

This report presents findings from a study commissioned by Local Trust to examine how local authorities in England are using neighbourhood approaches to support their most disadvantaged areas. We wanted to provide up-to-date information to the local government sector on the role of neighbourhood working in tackling disadvantage. For Local Trust, the report also supports their new national network for neighbourhood improvement, aimed at fostering learning among those involved in community-led and place-based regeneration.

The research focuses on 194 English local authorities with areas in the most disadvantaged 10% based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Our findings come from in-depth research (desk research and phone interviews) with a sample of 34 local authorities selected from the 194:

- Out of 34 authorities we engaged with in-depth, 32 have some form of neighbourhood working. However, the type, scale, and council involvement vary greatly.
- 19 local authorities described a neighbourhood management model similar to the traditional model developed in the early 2000s focusing on small, manageable areas with dedicated staff acting as intermediaries between residents and public services.
- Four local authorities described a community safety-led model led by a community safety partnership or jointly with the police, and focused on crime and antisocial behaviour.
- Seven local authorities described an approach focused on a building or community hub and viewed physical access to services as key to reducing disadvantage.
- Four local authorities said they were supporting neighbourhood forums of some kind.
- Five local authorities said they had a health-led model, often in partnership with NHS or public health initiatives targeting health inequalities.
- Nine local authorities were working with a parish or town council.

Neighbourhood-level initiatives remain a default approach for many local authorities in addressing disadvantage. While many features of the original model of neighbourhood

management can still be seen, there is growing diversity in approaches due both to financial pressures and innovation. Authorities are collaborating with partners like health services and family hubs, and there is increasing recognition of the importance of working with residents as equal partners.

While all the local authorities we investigated have areas of significant socioeconomic disadvantage, not all were specifically targeting neighbourhood approaches on their most disadvantaged neighbourhoods or applying a more intensive approach in those communities. There is potential for more authorities to focus efforts where they are needed most.

For Local Trust, its national network for neighbourhood improvement, and its wider work on community wealth and improving disadvantaged neighbourhoods – there are important questions. What policy levers work in a landscape where goals are the same – reducing geographic disadvantage – but where structures differ from place to place? Top-down neighbourhood renewal programmes of the past relied on local uniformity, but what would this look like now? What can be done to support initiatives designed to help residents do more for themselves not just in ways which ease financial pressures, but also in ways which empower?

Lastly, the emergence of new approaches from public health and social care professionals has brought new energy and new ways of working. This may risk policy amnesia – forgetting what has already been learned – but there is also an exciting sense of urgency and purpose behind approaches like Local Area Coordination with its focus on reducing ill-health, and attention to evidence.

# 1. Introduction

Local Trust commissioned Shared Intelligence to conduct a landscape review to identify how and to what extent local authorities in England are currently using neighbourhood approaches to support their most disadvantaged neighbourhoods/wards/estates. The aim of this report is to provide the local government sector with up-to-date information about the role of neighbourhood and locality working in tackling areas of disadvantage. For Local Trust, the aim of this report is also to support its new national network for neighbourhood improvement, a learning network for those involved in community-led and place-based regeneration. The network is being incubated by Local Trust, and supported by New Local, and forms part of Local Trust's programme to create legacy from its mission to support resident-led change in left-behind communities.

The research in this report builds on our previous work with Local Trust<sup>2</sup> in which we tried to understand the impact of neighbourhood approaches using counterfactuals and developed a set of typologies of council-led neighbourhood working:

- Council-led neighbourhood management
- Neighbourhood forums (council-led)
- NHS-led neighbourhood initiatives
- Parish and town councils
- Council regeneration teams
- Community land trusts (with council involvement)
- Development trusts (with council involvement)
- Residents' Associations and resident-led area partnerships
- Business Improvement Districts

We used these typologies in this research to identify types of neighbourhood working present in local authorities with disadvantaged neighbourhoods/wards/estates. Those shown in bold are featured in this report. Those in grey were in our original typology but when

speaking to local authorities for this research we did not find examples of these approaches being used to support disadvantaged areas.

This research also looks at how local authorities are identifying which disadvantaged neighbourhoods to target with neighbourhood initiatives; what data are they using, and what other methods are they using besides data?

The research focuses on the 194 English local authorities with one or more lower super output areas (LSOAs) falling into the most disadvantaged 10%, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD10%)<sup>3</sup> (see Appendix 2 for a list of the 194 local authorities which meet this criteria).

To find out which of these 194 local authorities had some form of neighbourhood initiative in operation, we used two research approaches:

- In-depth desk research, exploratory phone calls to councillors, and online interviews with council officers. We applied this research to a structured sample of 50 of the 194 local authorities (see Appendix 1 for the list of the 50 local authorities).
- A survey sent to all 194 local authorities in scope, to validate the in-depth research.

<sup>2</sup> Everybody needs good neighbourhoods report, 19 Dec 2023

<https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research/everybody-needs-good-neighbourhoods/>

<sup>3</sup> The indices of deprivation are published by the UK Government and measure relative deprivation across seven socioeconomic domains, in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas. The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as IMD, is an aggregate score combining all seven domains.

# 2. Methodology

## Methodology for the in-depth research with the structured sample of 50 local authorities:

1. The scope agreed with Local Trust was English local authorities with one or more IMD10% LSOAs within its boundaries. There are 194 local authorities meeting these criteria.
2. From these 194 local authorities, Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI)<sup>4</sup>, with whom we collaborated for our previous research for Local Trust, produced a structured sample of 50 local authorities for the in-depth research. This sample of 50 included local authorities with at least 10 IMD10% LSOAs and was balanced for geographic type (rural, mixed, town and small city and metropolitan), and representation across each of the regions.
3. In-depth research followed this sequence, including:
  - a. Online desk research to identify a neighbourhood or communities team and their contact details, and to identify elected councillors in wards containing IMD10% LSOAs.
  - b. Telephone calls to request research interviews with councillors representing IMD10% areas and council officers.
  - c. Where an interview was agreed, the topic guide included questions about strategy for improving disadvantaged neighbourhoods, what forms of neighbourhood working are in operation, methods for identifying target neighbourhoods, and desired outcomes.
4. We were able to obtain a response from 34 local authorities out of the sample of 50 targeted for in-depth research. Data from the desk research and interviews was then organised to identify categories of neighbourhood working described in section 4 below.
5. Finally, we conducted follow-up interviews with four of the 50 to develop detailed case studies. These were selected to illustrate in more detail the different approaches councils are taking to supporting disadvantaged wards using neighbourhood initiatives.

Methodology for the survey of all 194 local authorities with one or more IMD10% LSOAs within its boundaries:

1. We created an online survey asking questions on the same issues as in the topic guide for the in-depth research.
2. The survey was first promoted via the newsletters and email communications of local government membership bodies. Survey uptake however was low, exacerbated by the school summer holidays.
3. The survey was then promoted using a commercially purchased contact list of approximately 900 local authority officers from across the target 194 in-scope local authorities, in roles related to communities, strategy, and regeneration. This approach was more successful and brought the number of responses up to 16.

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<sup>4</sup> OCSI work with public and community organisations to improve services, and turn complex datasets into engaging stories for communities and decision makers. Since 2018, OCSI have worked with Local Trust on a [Community Needs Index](#), and have also worked with us to produce an experimental research paper – [Everybody needs good neighbourhoods](#)

# 3. In-depth findings from 34 local authorities

We were able to conduct in-depth research with 34 local authorities (out of the sample 50) which each contained at least 10 disadvantaged LSOAs (IMD10% LSOAs). Out of these 34 local authorities, we found some form of neighbourhood working in all but two. While 32 out of the 34 local authorities we spoke to have some form of neighbourhood working, the type, scale, and the extent to which the council is involved varies greatly between them.

Based on the information we were able to gather from desk research and interviews, we created the following categories to describe in detail what we found and applied these to the local authorities we had data for. This was based on our assessment of what we read and heard, and authorities may not have categorised themselves using these terms. We allocated some local authorities to more than one category (e.g. an authority might appear both in "Neighbourhood management" and "Neighbourhood forums"). Appendix 1 contains the full list of local authorities and how we have categorised them.

Anne Power and Emmet Bergin in their 1999 paper *Neighbourhood Management*<sup>5</sup> described a model focused on areas with up to 6,000 residents and around three quarters of a mile or one kilometre across. They further described the model as hinging on "*someone in charge at neighbourhood level to ensure reasonable conditions and co-ordinate the many inputs already flowing into neighbourhoods*".

The 19 places which said they had some form of council-led neighbourhood management tended to have one or more council staff assigned to each neighbourhood with a remit to act as an intermediary between residents and local services, solve-problems, and support community empowerment – also consistent with the original model. Some of these are long-established initiatives dating back to the early 2000s, some have been adapted over time, some have been more recently implemented, and in the case of Liverpool neighbourhood, management has been reintroduced after an absence of several years.

Manchester City Council is another example of a local authority with a long-established neighbourhood management model still operating and dating back to the early 2000s. However, the council has aggregated its smaller neighbourhood areas over the years so that now the city's population of more than half a million is divided into just three large sectors (some 30 times larger than the "recognisable" neighbourhoods envisaged in the original model). Nonetheless the council still attempts to tailor its approach in each of these three areas to deliver a place-based approach.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Power and Emmet Bergin's paper became the blueprint for the Government's centrally funded Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder programme which ran from 2001 to 2011 [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/6480/1/Neighbourhood\\_Management.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/6480/1/Neighbourhood_Management.pdf)





Co-chair Ralph Rudden leads a tour of Sale West's community green spaces at the Big Local climate residential. Photographer: David Oates. Big Local area: Sale West

Liverpool City Council's neighbourhood model also dates to the mid-2000s and groups the city's electoral wards into 13 neighbourhoods each with a neighbourhood team. Each neighbourhood team is currently led by a senior council manager who can identify and tackle place-based issues. It is worth noting that the current model was recently introduced (or more accurately re-introduced) from scratch, after several years without any form of neighbourhood working in the city.

In Newcastle, which also has a long-established neighbourhood model, funding cuts have led the council to reduce the scale of neighbourhood working and become more focused on need. The most recent evolution of their neighbourhood approach is the Empowering People in Communities (EPiC) programme. This represents a shift away from having dedicated neighbourhood managers in every part of the city, and instead prioritises only their most disadvantaged areas. In the

areas EPiC targets, it provides community budgets and encourages residents to "build community spirit" and work with the local authority to tackle local issues.

Those local authorities still operating something not dissimilar to the early 2000s neighbourhood management model illustrate the strength and relevance of the original concept.

### Neighbourhood management (community safety)

Four out of the 34 local authorities said they operated a community safety/policing-led model of neighbourhood working. Community safety and policing-led models of neighbourhood working can also be traced back to the early 2000s, although the original drivers were slightly different from neighbourhood management and stemmed from concerns about a lack of visible 'reassurance' policing, especially in high crime areas<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Many of the early 2000s neighbourhood management initiatives operated in close coordination with the police who were incentivised to adopt neighbourhood models through the work of Community Safety Partnerships (introduced in 1998) and extra funding for neighbourhood policing between 2005 and 2008.

Current levels of council involvement in this model of neighbourhood working vary. For example, Telford and Wrekin Council take a lead role in their Safer and Stronger Communities project, working with the police and the voluntary sector to build capacity and help residents feel safer in their homes. Neighbourhood coordinators work with residents across Telford to identify concerns and to develop neighbourhood action plans, which are then carried out jointly by the council and police. The council has also assigned three coordinators to work across different council departments to reduce opportunities for fly-tipping, graffiti and anti-social behaviour. Southampton also has a community-safety led approach, overseen by a community safety partnership (known as the Safe City Partnership) and delivered by staff with a remit to engage communities and join up services. They focus most of their attention on the city's disadvantaged neighbourhoods which are also the places most affected by crime. More details about Southampton's approach are in our case study.

### **Neighbourhood management (hubs and buildings)**

Seven local authorities in the sample of 50 said they use community buildings (they often call them hubs) to tackle disadvantage by creating physical spaces for residents to access council services and where community groups can meet. Cornwall explained that they have been able to do this using funding from the national Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes (which has enabled them to open 23 Family Hubs county-wide). These programmes are primarily intended to provide facilities for parents and carers to access support, but as community infrastructure the role of these buildings is much broader. Other local authorities have opened buildings to tackle disadvantage, without national government funds but also intended to provide meeting places for groups, individual residents and service providers. These tend to be located centrally (similar in concept to one-stop-shops in the past), bringing together council services under one roof to simplify access. An example of this can be seen with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Community Lounges programme, which enable residents to speak face-to-face with staff from social care, employment services and housing all in one place. Hackney said they now view youth clubs not just as spaces for young people to socialise and do something enjoyable, but as a form of

community hub which makes it easier for young people to access services. Young Hackney, the local authority's service for all young people aged 16-19, is an example of this, providing opportunities for young people to get more involved in their community.

### **Neighbourhood forums**

Four local authorities said they were supporting neighbourhood forums of some kind. Birmingham City Council's neighbourhood action coordinators pilot approach began in 2022 as an initiative to tackle local environmental and antisocial behaviour issues, focused on the most disadvantaged parts of the city. Since it was set up however, the council has become financially distressed, and the neighbourhood pilot has had to adapt. The focus of the pilot is now much more on building capacity, and often this means supporting and liaising with community-led neighbourhood forums, or in some cases helping establish community-led forums where none exist.

Brighton takes a similar approach, focusing on supporting communities with community development activities helping to set up groups and projects, while only being able to deliver limited activity directly. Brighton's approach is focused only on its disadvantaged areas.

### **Health-led neighbourhood initiatives**

In five local authorities out of the 34 we found a health-focused model. These were a mix of NHS-led and council-led (primarily by local authority public health teams) and tended to be more recently established than the 'traditional' models. An example of an NHS-led model is the Getting Help in Neighbourhoods programme described by Leicester City Council. This is active across Leicester and Leicestershire, led by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. The initiative has created integrated neighbourhood teams across the city and county, which bring together local authorities, voluntary sector organisations, and local businesses to deliver a multi-disciplinary approach to health improvement. The aim of this model (not unique to Leicestershire) is to ensure more people are getting tailored health improvement support, relevant to their needs, from someone based in their community.

Some health-focused initiatives are funded by the national Supporting Families programme which targets support at vulnerable families while simultaneously trying to change how agencies work so they can become more

joined-up and person-centred. In Doncaster this is being managed at a ward level which means there are neighbourhood family-support teams who work directly with the NHS to build the resilience of vulnerable families. The programme reports against the national outcomes framework for Supporting Families, which includes metrics for crime, education, and mental and physical health.

Some local authorities are also piloting new initiatives from the field of public health such as Local Area Coordination. In South Tyneside, this consists of the public health team recruiting local coordinators to work at ward level, to encourage residents to recognise their own capabilities to improve their health. More information on this approach can be seen in our South Tyneside case study. Wellbeing Hubs in Plymouth are another example of a neighbourhood-level public health-led initiative. This involves ward councillors and voluntary sector organisations working with public health teams to address the wider determinants of health. Redcar and Cleveland have adopted a similar approach, in which their newly formed neighbourhood team (which resulted from the merger of their community development and health improvement teams) work at neighbourhood level to identify specific needs and find solutions for these.

There are many explanations for the increase in health-focussed and NHS-led neighbourhood initiatives. One is likely to be a slow-burn consequence of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which saw public health functions (including local Directors of Public Health) transferred from the NHS to councils in 2013. Another is the shift in NHS emphasis over the past decade from treatment to prevention, as set out in the 2019-2028 NHS Long Term Plan, which is expected to be strengthened in a revised NHS 10-year plan in 2025. A more recent factor is likely to be the introduction of 'Core20PLUS5' in 2021<sup>7</sup>, the new NHS approach to reducing health inequalities. It is focused on the 20% most disadvantaged areas and five clinical needs. This in large part a response to the findings of the Marmot Reviews of 2010<sup>8</sup> and 2020<sup>9</sup> which focused NHS attention on the 'social gradient in health' which is that those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods die younger and are ill for a larger proportion of their lives than the least deprived.

## Parish and town councils

In nine local authorities out of the 34 we identified an active parish or town council advocating for the needs of their community and supporting residents in a similar way to a neighbourhood management team. With four of those nine authorities, the local authority is supporting their parish or town council to deliver some form of neighbourhood working. An example of this is Swindon Borough Council's relationship with South Swindon Parish Council. The borough council has supported the parish with funding and practical help to improve a small local park, and now has an ambitious £600,000 plan to enhance sport and recreation facilities at a much bigger recreation ground in the area.

There are other places where parish and town councils are taking a neighbourhood approach but without direct local authority support. For example, many parishes in Pendle have been granted permission to create their own neighbourhood plan, but there seems to be limited involvement in the delivery of the plan from Pendle Borough Council.

## No neighbourhood approach at all

There were only two out of the 34 local authorities where we were unable to identify any kind of neighbourhood working. These were Ashfield District Council and Northumberland County Council. We must caveat by saying that either council may operate some form of neighbourhood working in their disadvantaged neighbourhoods, but we were unable to discover this through our research. Nonetheless, both local authorities cited a lack of funding as the main reason for not using neighbourhood working to support their most disadvantaged communities. This lack of funding has meant there is little physical infrastructure in place, which is needed to stimulate neighbourhood working. This also means there is a lack of physical space for people to meet (be that the council or residents), or places from which the council can deliver services.

<sup>7</sup> NHS England » Core20PLUS5 (adults) – an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities

<sup>8</sup> The Marmot Review – 2010

<sup>9</sup> The Marmot Review 10 years on

## To what extent are local authorities targeting disadvantaged wards?

All 34 local authorities we conducted research on contain LSOAs in the 10% most deprived according to IMD. By definition all the local authorities in this research which are operating some form of neighbourhood working are using it to support their most disadvantaged wards (we found no examples of a council excluding disadvantaged areas from a wider neighbourhood approach).

However, not all local authorities are using neighbourhood approaches specifically to target their most disadvantaged areas or to apply a more intensive approach.

Nine local authorities have a borough-wide approach to neighbourhood working but also have specific programmes for their most disadvantaged wards. For example, Leeds City Council are committed to community asset building throughout the city but deliver targeted support in their most disadvantaged wards (see case study for more details on Leeds City Council's approach). Southampton City Council also have a council-wide approach to tackling disadvantage focused on areas with the biggest community safety problems, which also tend to be the most disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms.

Durham County Council have a strategic framework for supporting communities across the county but have also established a Community Wealth Building team to target their most deprived areas. They hope to fund this approach using their next round of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). As part of Durham's community wealth building approach, improvements to community infrastructure in disadvantaged communities will be priorities for UKSPF investment.<sup>10</sup> This is on top of their current UKSPF projects which have a county-wide focus on sustainability to improve community resilience through Community Hubs, Green Champions and Community Food.<sup>11</sup>

Another three local authorities take a neighbourhood approach only in their disadvantaged wards. Tendring District Council has a specific neighbourhood team for the Jaywick Sands area, which contains one of their most disadvantaged wards, West Clacton and Jaywick Sands – also one of the most disadvantaged areas nationally. The team consists of a neighbourhood manager and two wardens, who work with partner

organisations to improve coordination e.g. facilitating Jaywick Sands Networking Group meetings. On a larger scale, Newcastle is using its EPiC programme (previously described) to focus on disadvantaged wards only. Brighton also focuses only on its areas of disadvantage through its community development approach which is mainly about setting up neighbourhood groups and community projects.

This means most of the local authorities we spoke to, who have some form of neighbourhood working, could be doing more to exploit the potential of neighbourhood initiatives to support their most disadvantaged communities.

## Data used by councils to identify disadvantaged wards and their needs

From what local authorities told us the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and other ONS data are by far the most common sources of data used by local authorities for identifying disadvantaged wards or neighbourhoods.

A number of local authorities said they also combine IMD and other ONS data with their own locally produced ward/neighbourhood profiles, and many also draw on insight and intelligence from community engagement with residents and community organisations.

Some local authorities said they also used proxy measures such as antisocial behaviour or fly tipping reporting. However, higher levels of reported crime or fly tipping does not always provide an accurate picture, it may simply indicate that residents in some places are more confident about reporting. These measures of local environmental quality also miss out other indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage like poor health, low skills or high unemployment.

Leeds City Council told us they are using the social progress index<sup>12</sup> (SPI) – a tool which allows them to measure community wellbeing in a more holistic way than narrow measures of economic value, or environmental quality.

## Measuring impact and outcomes

Approaches to measuring impact varied depending on how different initiatives came about, and whether they were part of larger national programmes which often come with pre-determined reporting requirements. For example neighbourhood initiatives linked

<sup>10</sup> UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in County Durham

<sup>11</sup> Live UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects – Durham County Council

<sup>12</sup> The Leeds Social Progress Index – Inclusive Growth Leeds

to the Supporting Families programme are required to report against a national outcomes framework<sup>13</sup> which sets out family and individual level outcomes. The framework also provides a baseline against which outcomes can be measured. The Family Hub programme also comes with an evaluation programme and monitoring and reporting requirements which local authorities (e.g. Cornwall) must follow. For those local authorities delivering neighbourhood management with no links to wider programmes, the picture is much more mixed. Some like Leeds with their Social Progress Index (described in their case study) have well-developed systems for monitoring progress and impact, while for others their processes are less clear.

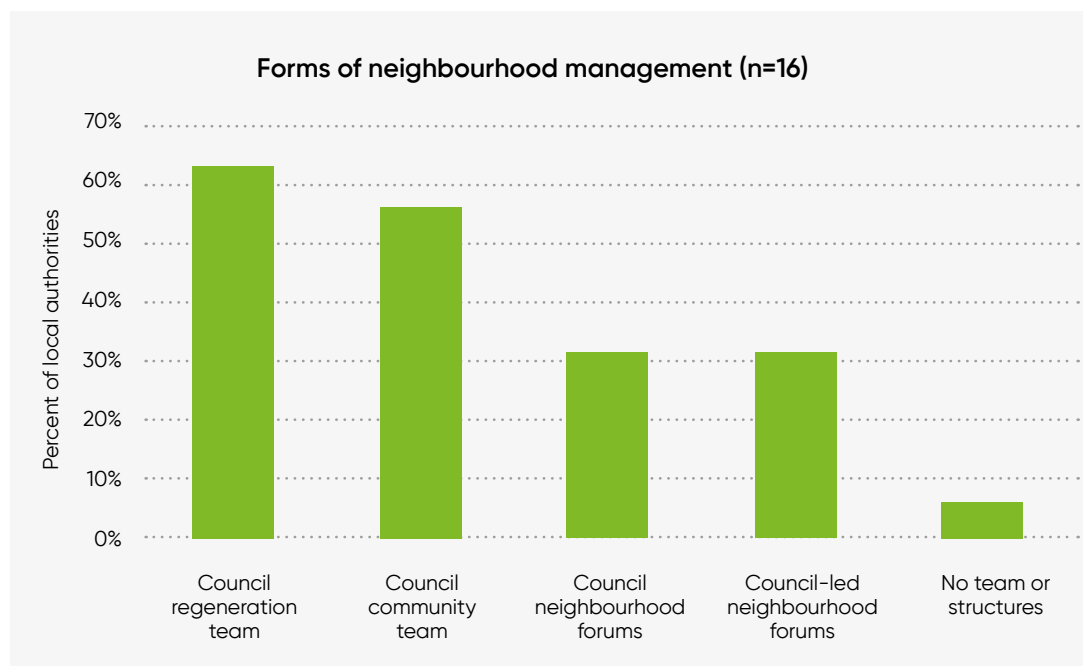
### Validating the in-depth research findings with the survey findings

The purpose of the survey was to validate the in-depth research by asking the other local authorities with IMD10% LSOAs about the same issues as in our topic guide for the in-depth research. We were able to generate 16 answers from different authorities not including those we had already contacted for the in-depth research.

This section sets out the survey responses and compares them to the in-depth research, looking in particular at whether the survey tends to confirm, or not, the in-depth research.

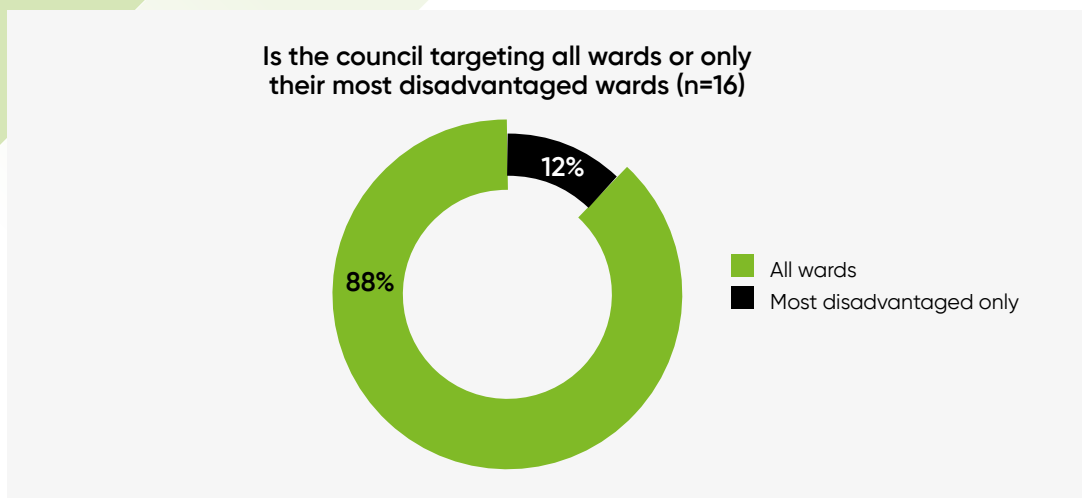
All but 6% of respondents (i.e. one respondent) reported some form of neighbourhood management. This is in line with our in-depth research which found only two out of 34 of the local authorities we contacted having no neighbourhood management.

### Forms of neighbourhood management



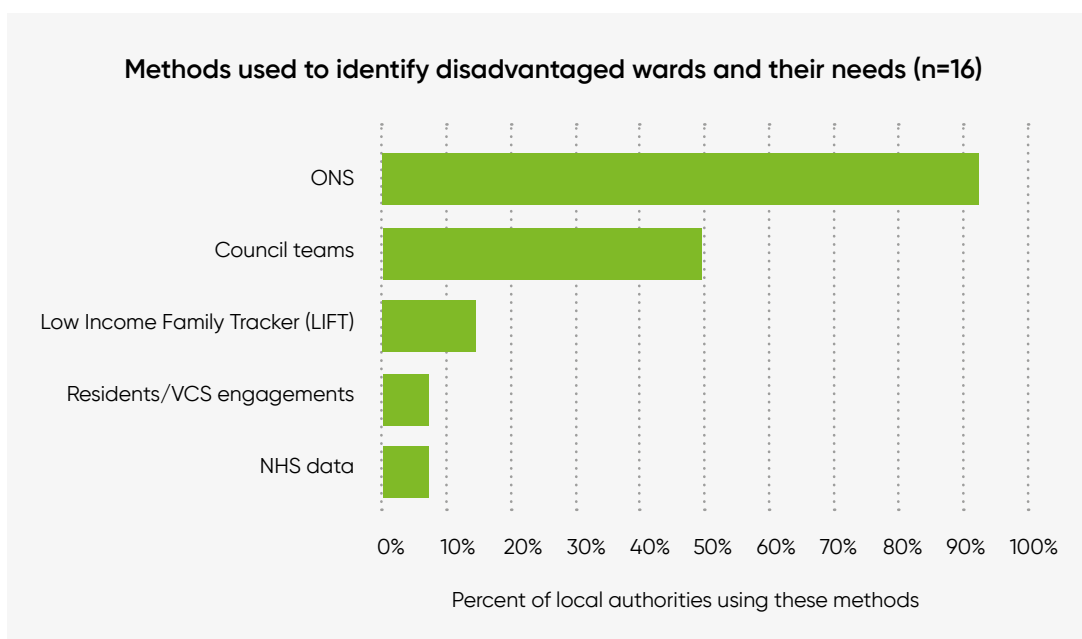
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-families-programme-guidance-2022-to-2025/chapter-3-the-national-supporting-families-outcome-framework>

## All wards or just the most disadvantaged



Twelve percent of survey respondents indicated their neighbourhood approach was targeted only at their most disadvantaged wards with the remainder saying it covered all wards. This is compared to three out of 34 in our in-depth research.

## Data used to identify disadvantaged neighbourhoods



Similar to our in-depth research, the use of ONS data was the most widely used method of identifying disadvantaged wards by survey respondents. The Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)<sup>14</sup> was mentioned by two respondents (12%), but this was not mentioned in our in-depth research.

<sup>14</sup> LIFT is an interactive tool that combines comprehensive welfare policy analytics with local authority administrative data to help councils identify financially struggling residents.

## 4. Research limitations

**Timing:** This research project was commissioned just before the announcement of the 2024 General Election in the United Kingdom, meaning that during the main fieldwork phase many local politicians were busy supporting local parliamentary candidates with their campaigns. This was then followed by a summer break in which many officers and councillors were on annual leave, making it difficult to get in contact with different local authorities. Ideally this type of research, reliant on personal contact, would not have been conducted in a less disrupted period.

**Information obtained from councillors:** Our approach relied on contact with ward councillors in areas with IMD10% LSOAs. The benefits of this are that councillors know their areas well and councillors' contact details are usually listed on local authority 'find your councillor' webpages. But councillors did not always have the detail we needed when it came to the relationship between activity in their ward, and wider initiatives. Council officers had a better understanding of these wider links but they were harder and more time-consuming to contact. A more systematic approach to contacting councillors and then seeking an officer contact might be more effective.

**Categorisation:** Our categorisations are based on our own assessment, using the information we had available from desk research and interviews. It represents our best understanding of the approach being taken but the authority might in some cases describe it differently.



Visit to Arches Big Local 2024.

Photographer: Local Trust. Big Local area: Arches Local (Central Chatham, Luton Arches)

# 5. Conclusions

**Neighbourhood-level initiatives remain a default strategy for many local authorities, and we have found some form of neighbourhood working in 32 out of the 34 local authorities we were able to contact. All of these had 10 or more highly disadvantaged areas within their boundaries. Many of these initiatives retain features similar to the early 2000s model of neighbourhood management. However, they also often differ from that traditional model, and from each other – in other words there is a diversity of approaches which seems to be increasing.**

The financial context is a major influence, with budget pressures in some cases forcing councils to dilute their approach – e.g. larger areas, fewer staff. But it is also encouraging innovation – e.g. finding ways to build community capacity even where councils have very limited resources, using new kinds of data and metrics, adopting new models of practice. There is also a sense of humility that councils no matter how large only achieve change by working with communities as equals.

Neighbourhood initiatives are often closely connected with other activities also focused on reducing geographic or structural inequalities including the national Family Hubs programme, Community Safety Partnerships, and the Local Area Coordination approach to health improvement and prevention. Local authorities are not always in the lead but are often supporting partners from health, the police, or parish councils. Where other partners are taking the lead, it can bring new models, ways of working, new evidence, and new intellectual rigour.

What this indicates is that as a basic concept, there is great strength in placing local public services geographically close to residents especially when it comes to tackling disadvantage and reducing inequalities. But what we see today seems very different to the first generation of neighbourhood management 25 years ago. There is much greater diversity of approaches influenced by differences in local need, local ecosystems, and local assets. Local authorities also seem more likely to recognise that they can only tackle difficult problems when they treat residents as equal partners.

However, while around one third of the local authorities we spoke with are using neighbourhood initiatives specifically to help their most disadvantaged communities (or implementing a more intensive version of their borough-wide approach), it was unclear what the remainder are doing to give disadvantaged communities extra help. Maybe this is because they see their whole borough as disadvantaged when compared nationally, or maybe it is because they lack the resources.

For Local Trust, its national network for neighbourhood improvement – and its wider work on community wealth and improving disadvantaged neighbourhoods – there are important questions. What policy levers work in a landscape where goals are the same – reducing geographic disadvantage – but where structures differ from place to place? Top-down neighbourhood renewal programmes of the past relied on local uniformity, but what would this look like now? What can be done to support initiatives designed to help residents do more for themselves not just in ways which ease financial pressures, but also in ways which empower?

Lastly, the emergence of new approaches from public health and social care professionals has brought new energy and new ways of working. There may be some risk of re-inventing the wheel in this and policy amnesia – forgetting what has already been learned – but there is also an exciting sense of urgency and purpose behind approaches like Local Area Coordination with its focus on reducing ill-health, and attention to evidence.



# Appendix 1

Structured sample of 50 LAs for in-depth research

Local Authority	Neighbourhood working present	Neighbourhood management	Neighbourhood management (community safety)	Neighbourhood management (hubs and buildings)	Neighbourhood forums	Health-led neighbourhood initiative	Parish and town councils	Council wide approach but specific programme for disadvantaged wards	Approach only in disadvantaged wards
Ashfield									
Barnsley	X		X						
Birmingham	X	X			X			X	
Blackpool	X								
Brighton and Hove	X	X			X				X
Bristol, City of	X	X		X				X	
Cheshire West and Chester	X	X					X		
Cornwall	X	X					X		
County Durham	X	X					X	X	
Doncaster	X	X			X	X			
East Lindsey	X						X		
East Suffolk	X	X		X			X		
Hackney	X	X		X					
Leeds	X	X						X	
Leicester	X					X			
Lincoln	X	X		X				X	
Liverpool	X	X							
Manchester	X	X		X					
Medway	X							X	
Newcastle upon Tyne	X	X							X
Northumberland									
Norwich	X	X							
Pendle	X						X		
Peterborough	X						X		
Plymouth	X			X		X			
Redcar and Cleveland	X	X				X			
Sandwell	X								
South Tyneside	X					X		X	
Southampton	X	X						X	
Stoke-on-Trent	X			X					
Swale	X						X		
Swindon	X	X					X		
Telford and Wrekin	X		X					X	
Tending	X	X			X				X
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>

### Local Authority

Barrow-in-Furness	Unable to contact
Brent	Unable to contact
Calderdale	Unable to contact
Coventry	Unable to contact
East Riding of Yorkshire	Unable to contact
Enfield	Unable to contact
Great Yarmouth	Unable to contact
Haringey	Unable to contact
Hastings	Unable to contact
Hyndburn	Unable to contact
Ipswich	Unable to contact
Kingston upon Hull, City of	Unable to contact
Nottingham	Unable to contact
Thanet	Unable to contact
Torbay	Unable to contact
Wolverhampton	Unable to contact



Scene setters of Elthorne Estate. Volunteers from Elthorne Pride distribute 'complimentary store cupboard basics' to members of the community at St Johns Community Centre on the Elthorne Estate in N19, London. Photographer: Zute Lightfoot. Big Local area: Elthorne Estates

# Appendix 2

## all 194 IMD10% LAs

Allerdale	Darlington	Kirklees	Scarborough
Amber Valley	Dartford	Knowsley	Sedgemoor
Arun	Daventry	Lancaster	Sefton
Ashfield	Derby	Leeds	Selby
Ashford	Derbyshire Dales	Leicester	Sheffield
Barking and Dagenham	Doncaster	Lewisham	Shropshire
Barnet	Dorset	Lincoln	Solihull
Barnsley	Dover	Liverpool	Somerset West and Taunton
Barrow-in-Furness	Dudley	Luton	Taunton
Basildon	Ealing	Maidstone	South Kesteven
Bassetlaw	East Lindsey	Malvern Hills	South Ribble
Bath and North East Somerset	East Riding of Yorkshire	Manchester	South Somerset
Bedford	East Staffordshire	Mansfield	South Tyneside
Birmingham	East Suffolk	Medway	Southampton
Blackburn with Darwen	Eastbourne	Mendip	Southend-on-Sea
Blackpool	Enfield	Middlesbrough	Southwark
Bolsover	Erewash	Milton Keynes	St. Helens
Bolton	Fenland	Newark and Sherwood	Stockport
Boston	Folkestone and Hythe	Newcastle upon Tyne	Stockton-on-Tees
Bournemouth,	Forest of Dean	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Stoke-on-Trent
Christchurch and Poole	Fylde	Newham	Sunderland
Bradford	Gateshead	North Devon	Sutton
Breckland	Gedling	North East Derbyshire	Swale
Brent	Gloucester	North East Lincolnshire	Swindon
Brighton and Hove	Gosport	North Lincolnshire	Tameside
Bristol, City of	Gravesham	North Somerset	Tamworth
Bromley	Great Yarmouth	North Tyneside	Telford and Wrekin
Burnley	Greenwich	North Warwickshire	Tending
Bury	Hackney	North West Leicestershire	Thanet
Calderdale	Halton	Northampton	Thurrock
Cannock Chase	Hammersmith and Fulham	Northumberland	Torbay
Canterbury	Haringey	Norwich	Tower Hamlets
Carlisle	Harrogate	Nottingham	Trafford
Castle Point	Hartlepool	Nuneaton and Bedworth	Wakefield
Charnwood	Hastings	Oldham	Walsall
Cheltenham	Havant	Oxford	Waltham Forest
Cheshire East	Havering	Pendle	Warrington
Cheshire West and Chester	Herefordshire, County of	Peterborough	Wellingborough
Chesterfield	Hertsmere	Plymouth	West Lancashire
Chorley	High Peak	Portsmouth	West Lindsey
Colchester	Hounslow	Preston	Westminster
Copeland	Hyndburn	Reading	Wigan
Corby	Ipswich	Redcar and Cleveland	Wiltshire
Cornwall	Isle of Wight	Redditch	Wirral
County Durham	Islington	Rochdale	Wolverhampton
Coventry	Kensington and Chelsea	Rossendale	Worcester
Crawley	Kettering	Rother	Wyre
Croydon	King's Lynn and West Norfolk	Rotherham	Wyre Forest
	Norfolk	Salford	York
	Kingston upon Hull, City of	Sandwell	

# Case study:

## South Tyneside Local Area Coordination

**South Tyneside sits between Sunderland and Gateshead on the northeast coast. It has a population of around 148,000 concentrated in Jarrow, Hebburn and South Shields and surrounding villages; areas with shipping and manufacturing heritage but impacted by industrial decline.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the example described in this case study, South Tyneside Council has also actively supported Big Local Jarrow, one of the 150 Big Local initiatives supported by Local Trust in disadvantaged neighbourhoods across the country.**

Over the past few years the council has decided to focus on preventative measures. This follows the development of a refreshed South Tyneside Vision and engagement with residents, businesses and partners, combined with the financial pressures faced by local government. The South Tyneside Vision has prevention as a cross-cutting theme. The aim is to boost long-term outcomes for residents, strengthen partnerships and reduce demand upon statutory services. The vision for adult social care is 'We all want people in South Tyneside to live in the place they call home with the people and things that they love, in communities where people look out for one another, doing things that matter to them'. Alongside objectives to support people to remain in control, prevention and early intervention is also a key objective, to help people stay well and independent for as long as possible.

The council sees this as key to meeting its responsibility under the Care Act to prevent, reduce and delay the need for care and support.<sup>16</sup>

As it explored different ways to achieve these objectives the council identified Local Area Coordination (LAC) as a possible approach. The current leadership in adult social care in particular saw the LAC approach to work differently as a system and to support communities across the borough. LAC was originally developed in Western Australia to

help people with disabilities live with family and in communities, and gain access to community resources.<sup>17</sup>

The approach has been brought to England and Wales by a national LAC network (hosted by Community Catalysts since 2017. Community Catalysts is a non-profit specialising in people-led health and social care.) The scope of LAC was expanded to a universal approach to support all individuals and families in their communities. LAC supports the prevention agenda, ensuring people can access the right amount of support in their community, rather than relying on formal or statutory services. It is not intended to solely target disadvantage. The aims are to support people in their communities, developing resilience and enabling community capacity building, support service integration and reform and thereby reducing demand on services.

### **Approach to targeting disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

South Tyneside council had been aware of the LAC approach for several years and is now in the early stages of practical implementation. During 2023 and early 2024 a LAC leadership group was established, reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board, and coordinators were recruited and embedded into communities in three wards – Primrose, Biddick and All Saints, and Whitburn and Marsden.

<sup>15</sup> South Tyneside Council | Our South Tyneside 2023

<sup>16</sup> The Care Act and the 'easements' to it – Care Quality Commission (cqc.org.uk)

<sup>17</sup> Local Area Coordination (citizen-network.org)



Reading booklet, hands hold pages. Connects 2023 film stills at Central Jarrow Big Local. Photographer: Press Record. Big Local area: Central Jarrow

The three wards were identified using place-based data including public health profiles, levels of referrals to adult social care (and levels and type of service provision), referrals to children's services including early help, housing data, anti-social behaviour reports, crime levels, attendance at Emergency Department and PCN level health data.

A key aspect of implementing LAC is to test and learn the approach in different areas to help understand what the system learns when LAC is present in an area.

The core of the LAC approach is embedding coordinators in the target wards. They build relationships with local people: "the hairdresser, post office, or community groups". Local people learn about the coordinator through word of mouth, meeting them in community venues or just out and about in the community, or through other groups and services working with people. The coordinators also coordinate with the Jarrow Big Local. The only eligibility criteria to receive support is that the person lives within the geographical boundaries.

Typically, a Local Area Coordinator will take as much time as needed through a series of conversations to discover what is a person's passion or ambition, and what they want to achieve to live their vision of a good life. The coordinator will help them achieve that ambition or goal to improve their overall health. For example, they might encounter someone with poor health who has become isolated and inactive, but who loves the outdoors and working with nature, and may help them get involved in a local parks group through small achievable steps.

At the time of writing, South Tyneside have three coordinators who are currently in the process of getting to know their areas, communities, partners and residents. They are embedding themselves into local groups, such as Welcoming Places (formerly 'warm spaces'), community settings and other key groups. The council plans to continue embedding their approach, developing strategic planning, and reflecting on their learning to improve the approach. This work will be overseen by the LAC leadership group.

## Examples of LAC in other local authorities with IMD10% areas

Below are three examples of LAC areas in other parts of England also in IMD10% that have implemented the LAC approach.

Derby has been using the LAC approach since 2012. A 2020 evaluation of the service found that the LAC approach in Derby could particularly benefit young people who had spent time in care. The evaluation found that young people had positive relationships with their LAC coordinators and perceived them as being more approachable than staff from other statutory services.<sup>18</sup> The coordinators helped these young people with mental health and wellbeing support, providing them with confidence and tools to problem solve. This included taking control of educational and employment aspirations.

In York, the LAC approach has been embedded since 2017, with over half the city covered and 6,000 families, individuals and community groups introduced to the LAC team.<sup>19</sup> A 2019 summative evaluation into LAC in York found that the approach helped identify and support individuals with no prior knowledge of the service, and provided real change to the

communities supported.<sup>20</sup> The coordinators organised drop-in sessions, supported with appointments, provided companionship for isolated individuals and helped navigate and advocate for individuals to get support.

Haringey's LAC service was also established in 2017. A formative evaluation of the service found positive indicators of impact, including supporting community resources that promote social connection and support local people.<sup>21</sup>

These examples illustrate the way that different LAC projects target support to communities and individuals. The growing shift with the health and social care professions towards a preventative approach has created the conditions where the LAC approach has become attractive due to its focus on coordinators working at a neighbourhood level, one-to-one supportive relationships, and supporting individual resilience. Although it has come about through a different route to the traditional neighbourhood working model, the LAC approach features many of the same elements of asset-based community building and individual support found in neighbourhood management.

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<sup>18</sup> Evaluation of the Derby Local Area Coordination Approach ([communitycatalysts.co.uk](https://communitycatalysts.co.uk))

<sup>19</sup> LAC-in-York-Partners-Perspectives-1.pdf ([communitycatalysts.co.uk](https://communitycatalysts.co.uk))

<sup>20</sup> Local Area Coordination: Summative Evaluation ([whiterose.ac.uk](https://whiterose.ac.uk))

<sup>21</sup> June-2019-Haringey-formative-evaluation.pdf ([communitycatalysts.co.uk](https://communitycatalysts.co.uk))

# Case study:

## Birmingham Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinators

**Birmingham is one of the largest cities in the UK spatially, population-wise and in the scale of the city council. It has many disadvantaged neighbourhoods; 43% of Birmingham's population of around 1.1 million live in LSOAs in the 10% most deprived in England.<sup>22</sup> Since the pandemic the city council has experienced an escalating financial crisis which has led to the issuing of a 'section 114' notice of financial distress, alongside deep cuts to council jobs and services, as well as the selling of assets including community centres.<sup>23</sup>**

In 2022 before the financial situation began to deteriorate, the council launched a pilot neighbourhood action co-ordinator service focused on 22 of the city's 69 electoral wards. The pilot was conceived as a way to provide extra support to disadvantaged communities and reduce inequalities. As the financial situation worsened the focus of the pilot has shifted emphasis from providing support to communities as an end in itself, to supporting residents in ways that enable them to do more to help themselves. Officers delivering the neighbourhood action service have had to adapt their approach within the context of the city council's new approach known as "Shaping Birmingham's Future Together"<sup>24</sup> which emphasises "sharing power, recognising that the council cannot achieve its goals alone."

As a non-statutory service there is strong pressure on officers delivering the neighbourhood pilot to think "how do we do this with less?" and the initiative has shifted tone to "how do we fix this?" rather than "how does the Council fix this?" One blunt consequence of this is that the neighbourhood pilot cannot offer the kinds of community grants that were part of previous community approaches.

### Approach to targeting disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Birmingham has a rich history of different types of neighbourhood initiatives over the past 30 years. Some have been led by the council, some led by community organisations, and some (like the Balsall Heath Forum and St Paul's Community Development Trust) were created by the community because they felt forgotten by statutory services.

The current neighbourhood action co-ordinator pilot began by placing co-ordinators in the Sparkhill & Sparkbrook area, and was then extended into 22 other wards, with a remit to organise and facilitate activities that support local priorities.

Their aim is to empower residents, connect and create partnerships and develop neighbourhood action plans; the main focus of these plans is on place-based issues including fly tipping and litter, community safety and quality of life. Despite the significant change in the council's strategic emphasis set out in "Shaping Birmingham's Future Together", officers leading the pilot programme believe the focus on place will not drastically change, even if their working methods do.

<sup>22</sup> [Index of Deprivation 2019 | Birmingham City Council](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Birmingham city council's statement on its financial and budget situation](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Shaping Birmingham's Future Together is the council's strategic response to its financial situation](#)

The targeted wards were identified using three metrics: fly tipping, anti-social behaviour and the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The council recognises that this methodology has limitations, as high reporting rates do not always equate to high levels of need – in some areas with high levels of antisocial behaviour residents do not feel safe to report crime, or do not think it will make a difference, so according to the data those areas have no problems at all. For this reason, the pilot team also relies on “boots on the ground” to sense-check their targeting.

Measuring success of the programmes is currently under review. Their current methodology uses case studies to highlight impactful actions on the local level. However, when they extend beyond the pilot phase of the programme, the plan is to review the data and a data-led approach.

### **Tackling immediate issues but also building long-term capacity**

One of the original aims of the neighbourhood action co-ordinators was to help build community capacity, and this is now a more central aim in the context of Birmingham council's financial distress. The neighbourhood co-ordinators organise projects with local communities, council services, partners and ward councillors. The specific roles of the neighbourhood action co-ordinators are to:

1. Develop community-led action plans based on local priorities
2. Empower communities to take action to improve their neighbourhoods
3. Connect residents and council services
4. Co-ordinate action across services and communities to benefit local areas<sup>25</sup>

Existing levels of community capacity vary across the 22 wards covered by the initiative, and this influences how neighbourhood action co-ordinators apply their resources. Some wards already have well-established community infrastructure and assets, and those existing community-led organisations do not need much support. In fact, some are cautious about being drawn into doing more with the council because it might come with new risks. In other areas where community organisations are less well established, they are more interested in working with the council, often because they realise that working with the council can help them survive.

Sometimes what is needed is help with a specific issue:

- The pilot has worked with Welsh House Farm Big Local. The council were aware that the resident-led partnership was concerned about the high level of anti-social behaviour on their housing estate and that residents did not always know how to get incidents resolved. This resulted in staff from the neighbourhood action co-ordinator pilot working with the Community Safety Partnership and the local housing team to organise resident drop-in sessions to advise residents and problem-solve on those issues.
- Glebe Farm and Tile Cross is an area with relatively few established community groups. But there is one established organisation, Welcome Change, which runs a community centre and supports a network of community forums. One area in their patch did not have a forum so the neighbourhood action co-ordinators helped them establish this additional forum and get their constitution and bank account set up. That new forum was then able to identify unmet community needs; the first was a food club.

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25 Neighbourhood action co-ordinators | Birmingham City Council



Sometimes help is needed to make up for lack of community capacity:

- Brandwood and King's Heath is an area where overall employment is above average, as is the proportion of residents in higher-skilled jobs. However, within this area King's Heath is better-off in socioeconomic terms and has long established community infrastructure while Brandwood is less well-off and lacks infrastructure. Here the task for neighbourhood co-ordinators has been to connect the Brandwood side of the area with existing groups in King's Heath.

Sometimes help is needed to build and grow infrastructure:

- Neighbourhood action co-ordinators helped an allotment group in Stockland Green secure a small £2,000 grant. This success gave the group confidence to apply for larger grants, eventually securing £5,000 and £10,000 which enabled the group to take on larger projects.

In some areas covered by co-ordinators, existing organisations just need to be left to get on with it and will ask if they need help:

- Balsall Heath, despite being quite disadvantaged, has a long history of community action led by groups like the St Paul's Community Development Trust and others. The council support them when needed when they have specific asks, but they largely operate independently; in many ways this is where the council hope all neighbourhoods could get to.

# Case study:

## Southampton Community Safety Focus

**Southampton, which has a population of around 265,000, ranks high in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation at 55 out of 317 local authorities. The city also ranks as the third worst nationally on indices of crime deprivation<sup>26</sup>.**

For many disadvantaged communities, low level crime and dirty streets make it hard to feel a sense of pride and belonging. Southampton City Council approaches neighbourhood engagement with a crime and community safety focus. The city's Safe City Partnership takes the lead on fixing basic neighbourhood-level problems in the city's disadvantaged wards. Neighbourhood engagement is targeted at areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour, which are often the areas also having high levels of disadvantage. To aid this targeting, Southampton City Council uses a data-led approach to identify and prioritise areas for neighbourhood engagement using information from the Southampton Data Observatory<sup>27</sup>. This is a council project led by its data and insight team answering to a multi-agency steering group. It provides data on a range of indicators including population, health and community safety. The Data Observatory is also used to guide and support the Council's applications for external funding projects such as the Safer Streets fund.

### Targeting disadvantaged wards through community safety

Southampton City Council uses neighbourhood interventions to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The Safe City Strategy<sup>28</sup> guides activities around crime prevention and community safety, bringing together agencies from across the city to work together and share resources. This is overseen by a partnership which has membership from public, voluntary, business and community organisations. The Safe City Partnership<sup>29</sup>, of which Southampton City Council is a member, is responsible for the

governance of several locally commissioned services including the re-offending team, victim support, treatment services and community safety. The focus is on neighbourhoods with the greatest need, where crime and socioeconomic disadvantage are highest. While prioritising safety, crime prevention and reduction, the Safe City Partnership also aims to create stronger communities, ensuring that local people are given the opportunity to participate in initiatives. This includes increasing opportunities for local residents to advise and assist on the Council's plans by using feedback from the Strategic Assessment and Community Safety surveys to inform the Partnership's priorities each year.

The Stronger Communities team at Southampton City Council coordinates the local delivery of face-to-face community engagement for multiple council directorates, gathering insights and feedback from community engagement and community cohesion programmes and feeding this into higher level council meetings. Their experience in community engagement means the Stronger Communities team can offer guidance on community engagement to its network, helping staff in other directorates to target engagement in communities across the city.

The Council also targets community engagement events at the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These include Love Where You Live events, coordinated by the Stronger Communities team, such as a recent event in Townhill Park. This event was part of the Love Where You Live campaign which launched to work more closely with local communities to tackle neighbourhood issues, with the aim of

<sup>26</sup> Deprivation and poverty ([southampton.gov.uk](https://southampton.gov.uk))

<sup>27</sup> <https://data.southampton.gov.uk>

<sup>28</sup> MRD 1 for Safe City Strategy 2022-27.pdf ([southampton.gov.uk](https://southampton.gov.uk))

<sup>29</sup> Safe City Strategic Assessment 2021-22 ([southampton.gov.uk](https://southampton.gov.uk))

increasing the number of people who feel proud of their local area. Alongside the community event, the council brought in different agencies to speak with the local residents and address neighbourhood issues. As part of the Love Where You Live events, organisers also collected data and information from local residents about what they want to see in their neighbourhood, feeding back to the Council. This direct intervention in communities is a pre-emptive action, providing an opportunity for wider social networking and support rather than having to jump to clinical solutions.

Events programmes are backed up by various forms of community engagement and joint action. For example, the Council housing service assigns Tenant Engagement Officers to three large areas (West, East and Central North) and these officers work with local groups to sort out tenants' issues and to collect feedback from the community on projects such as neighbourhood improvement. Even though they cover larger patches, the Tenant Engagement Officers work at a smaller geographic scale with staff from the Stronger Communities team and local police to try to solve quality of life issues at the neighbourhood level.

Youth engagement is also a priority of the Council and is seen as part of community safety with several organisations working together to support young people. Southampton has a network of youth service providers which come together to form Young Southampton: including the Saints Foundation and No Limits, a young people's support charity. As part of this approach, following a 2021 Halloween disturbance in Millbrook, an initiative was started to provide youth engagement the following year in the form of events and activities to engage young people. The intention of this was prevention,

and this had the effect of reducing events of anti-social behaviour on Halloween night by half. However, there are still difficulties in effectively engaging with younger people, who are often uninterested in talking to the Council through traditional methods like groups, forums, or surveys. In response to this, the Council is exploring digital communication methods with the aim of achieving better engagement with these groups.

## **Council housing and the Housing Revenue Account**

Southampton City Council is also able to find additional resources to fund engagement with neighbourhoods through its retained ownership of council housing. The Council still owns 17,000 homes, equal to around one fifth of the city's total housing stock. Areas in Southampton with a large share of council housing also tend to be more disadvantaged and have higher crime rates. Ownership of their housing stock means that the Council controls a large Housing Revenue Account (HRA), with income from rents and charges ringfenced for spending on council estates. As a result, whereas wider council budgets have been reduced in recent years, the HRA funds have remained stable.

Some of the HRA income is spent on neighbourhood initiatives as a form of community capacity building. For example, funds from the HRA can pay for a Junior Warden Scheme. Junior Wardens are involved in activities such as developing understanding of the local environment and improving communal spaces such as clearing walkways and replacing planters. The scheme aims to create a child friendly environment and to encourage young people to make positive contributions to their local communities.<sup>30</sup>

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30 [Junior Neighbourhood Wardens \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://southampton.gov.uk)

# Case study:

## Leeds Targeted Ward Programme

**Leeds is one of England's largest cities with a population of around 800,000 residents and areas of both affluence and disadvantage. This case study explores how Leeds City Council uses locality working to improve outcomes in its most deprived neighbourhoods through a targeted ward programme. The approach is noteworthy for its methods of targeting, holistic and inter-agency delivery, preventative focus, and investment in long-term community capacity and asset building.**

The Council targets crime, poor quality environments, skills deficits and poor health through their targeted ward programme. The current approach began in 2017 when the Council realised it had 16 lower super output areas (LSOAs) in the 1% most disadvantaged areas nationally, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). These were located in eight wards. The Council decided to develop a new approach to "work together more collegiately across a particular neighbourhood [to] really make traction on lifting those areas out of the 1% and into a better position". The approach used was one of partnership-based neighbourhood working in their target wards.

When updated IMD data was released in 2019, the number of LSOAs in the 1% most disadvantaged had reduced from 16 to 12 – ie four areas showed improvement. Not all of this could be attributed to neighbourhood working, but the Council examined its approach to understand what might be having the greatest impact. The evidence pointed to preventative measures being most effective and from 2020 onwards it refined the approach further to focus on the remaining 12 priority "1%" LSOAs which were now located in six wards. The post-2020 iteration of the Leeds approach is more holistic, prevention-based and focused on each of the six wards as a whole, and not just the 1% most disadvantaged LSOAs.

Alongside using IMD data for targeting, since 2023/24 Leeds has also adopted the Social Progress Index (SPI) to inform decisions.<sup>31</sup> The council also hold annual workshops with partners to which residents are also invited. At these workshops they take the high-level issues they already know about, for example childhood obesity, and start looking at underlying causes and practical solutions. With obesity there might be difficult systemic issues like the types of shops each neighbourhood is served by, but there might also be practical things that can be tackled like making active travel easier.

### Targeted ward programme and council coordination

The current model of the targeted ward programme is led by the City Council's Safer and Stronger Communities Team. The team plays a coordinating role, supporting a core team in each of the six targeted wards drawn from housing, environmental services, children's services, neighbourhood policing, ward councillors and voluntary sector representatives. These core teams develop local partnership plans to identify priority issues in each ward which are most suited to joint action; issues which are "in the can-do space of those in the room".

<sup>31</sup> The **Leeds Social Progress Index (SPI)** is based on the SPI approach being adopted by a growing number of cities and has three main parts which form a rounded-view of progress and wellbeing: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. All scores are shown on the same 0-100 scale making it easier to see where the city is doing well and where it is weak.

The local partnership plans try to combine different priorities from across the council, ensuring that there is a “golden thread” from high-level aims to ward-level actions. Core teams also involve local community organisations. On top this the Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) is currently undertaking a future-focused listening project which hopes to speak with 5,000 residents in the six priority wards, asking what they are proud of about where they live and what their aspirations are for their neighbourhood a decade from now.

Preventative initiatives have included targeting health outcomes through the availability of fresh food, or better active travel routes.

Partners in Public Health and Active Leeds have also secured £1.3 million in revenue funding from Department for Transport to support walking and cycling activities connected to social prescribing which will focus on projects in the Burmantofts Harehills and Richmond Hill Primary Care Network. There is also a multi-agency preventative approach to anti-social behaviour, such as in Gipton & Harehills which has targeted street drinking and anti-social behaviour around Bonfire Night and Halloween. The council also takes a community capacity building approach, which is being reviewed as part of the community committee review. Further examples of the approach are in the box below.

Examples of action taken in targeted wards:

- In Hunslet & Riverside Ward, the communities and housing teams are supporting two newly created resident led forums: the Greenmount Resident Association and Beeston Hill Community association. There is also an asset-based community development (ABCD) worker in the ward.
- Burmantofts & Richmond Hill (BRH) Ward has a strong voluntary and community sector presence and have recently developed the Burmantofts and Richmond Hill Community Anchor Network to coordinate. There is an ambition to continue to develop this network to dovetail their activity with LCC.
- In Gipton and Harehills, a community builder has been recruited to support migrant families in the ward. The We Love Gipton Partnership also operates as an anchor organisation supporting activities in the area. A resident-led Neighbourhood Plan has also been developed with pilot funding from the government.
- In Killingbeck & Seacroft Ward, training led by LCC immigration and prevent teams has supported community representatives with factual information and training to allow them to accurately combat misinformation and negative narrative around asylum seekers and migrants. The We are Seacroft partnership brings together local third sector organisations and partners including local Councillors to provide a holistic provision of services across the ward, targeting funding applications where most needed and supporting each other to best support the community.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Specific information about initiatives in different wards in this case study was drawn from an Executive Board Report shared by LCC

A citywide level governance of the targeted ward programme is led by the Neighbourhood Improvement Board composed of officers and elected Members including Community Committee Chairs, scrutiny Members, city council directors, and senior leaders from within the NHS, CCG and West Yorkshire Police.<sup>33</sup> Board meetings provide a channel of communication between senior officers and members and frontline staff to take action and identify barriers on the ground. Board meetings rotate between the six targeted wards, and community organisations and residents feed into these meetings by presenting work they have been doing in the local area, as well as examples of the improvements they have achieved. This provides opportunities to share best practice and learning across the city.

One of the main outcomes of the council's targeted ward and core team model is that collaborating to tackle local issues has strengthened relationships between the different council teams. However, this has required active effort and coordination to connect hyper-local action to strategic priorities, and to have open and honest dialogue within the council to progress action.

This effect, whereby local services become more coordinated at the strategic level as a result of service collaboration at the neighbourhood level, is not a new discovery. It was a key finding from the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders of the early 2000s and was highlighted in the Department for Communities and Local Government's in-depth local case studies as part of the national evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.<sup>34</sup>

Success of the programme will be measured using the Social Progress Index (SPI) which allows Leeds to measure itself with regards to inclusive growth focusing on "Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing and Opportunity". The use of the SPI will complement the IMD data to create a benchmark of progress. Each indicator is reported for all of Leeds' 33 wards, so that the Priority Wards can be compared to the other wards in the city.

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<sup>33</sup> [Locality Working and Priority Neighbourhood Update Report Appendix 1 121020.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Local research project \(shu.ac.uk\)](#)



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