

# Briefing note: Levelling up 'left behind' neighbourhoods

## Summary

**Why Local Trust?** Local Trust has a large body of evidence and experience through its delivery of the [Big Local programme](#). Big Local demonstrates the potential that can be realised when local people have the power, resources, and agency to make a difference directly in their communities.

### **What do residents in 'left behind' neighbourhoods (LBNs) ask for, and/or do?**

When given the freedom to decide on their own, local residents typically explore three key areas: maintaining, creating or supporting civic assets; improving digital and physical connectivity; and building local civil society capacity.

**How did we identify 'left behind' areas?** The Community Needs Index (CNI), created by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) in partnership with Local Trust, captures the civic assets, connectedness and community engagement of areas. By linking it to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), 225 areas were identified as 'left behind' across England in 2019.

**What do the findings tell us?** Residents of these 'left behind areas' experience worse socioeconomic outcomes, worse educational attainment, lower participation in higher education, fewer job opportunities, and significantly worse health outcomes. They have also suffered disproportionately from the impact of COVID-19.

### **What is Local Trust doing with the research?**

Local Trust is the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods. The APPG explores and develops practical policy solutions that will help build community confidence and capacity, delivering improved social and economic outcomes for local residents.

**What's next for the research?** The CNI methodology used to identify 'left behind' neighbourhoods that could benefit from the

current levelling up agenda is constantly in development to ensure it is as rigorous as possible. As part of this ongoing process, Local Trust has opened a public consultation on the research methodology.

## Why Local Trust?

**Our mission is to put more power, resources and decision-making into the hands of local communities:** Local Trust is a national charity focused on supporting residents to develop their own solutions to local issues and problems. We do this through the delivery of the radical and innovative Big Local programme.

**We have the reach:** there are Big Local partnerships in 150 neighbourhoods across England. Typically these areas had missed out in the past from both lottery and statutory funding, despite experiencing higher-than-average levels of deprivation.

**Our approach is uniquely community-led:** in each neighbourhood, Local Trust has committed more than £1.1m of funding directly to groups of local residents, giving them the unique opportunity to spend money and take the decisions needed to make their communities better places to live.

**£1.1m**

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each of the 150  
communities**

**We have collected rich data:** ten years into the Big Local programme, Local Trust has a large body of evidence, demonstrating the potential that can be realised when local people are trusted with funds and provided with the support they need to come together, build partnerships and tackle issues that have previously seemed intractable.

**We understand communities:** Local Trust has gained direct and unique experience of the challenges faced by people trying to make a difference in their communities, and the priorities they set for themselves when given choice about where resources should be allocated.

Factors that have emerged as being of particular importance to local residents who are given the freedom to allocate resources and effect change have typically focused on the creation, improvement or expansion of social infrastructure. Specifically, residents valued:

Civic assets	Connectedness	Engaged community
Access or proximity to key community assets such as pubs, libraries and green space.	Access to key services such as health services, transport, digital infrastructure and local jobs.	Charity activity in the area and residents' engagement in civic life and community.

## How did we identify 'left behind' areas?

Taking what has been learned through the Big Local programme, Local Trust contracted OCSI – the research and data consultancy who provide support to the UK Government in the development and maintenance of the IMD – to ask them to find out whether data existed that might allow these three factors to be mapped and explored across England. OCSI developed a new measure called the Community Needs Index (CNI) that measures the community need in an area.

The research, published in 2019 and [updated in 2020](#), linked the CNI to the IMD to identify 225 'left behind' wards. These were largely concentrated in housing estates on the edges of post-industrial towns and cities, primarily in the Midlands and the north of

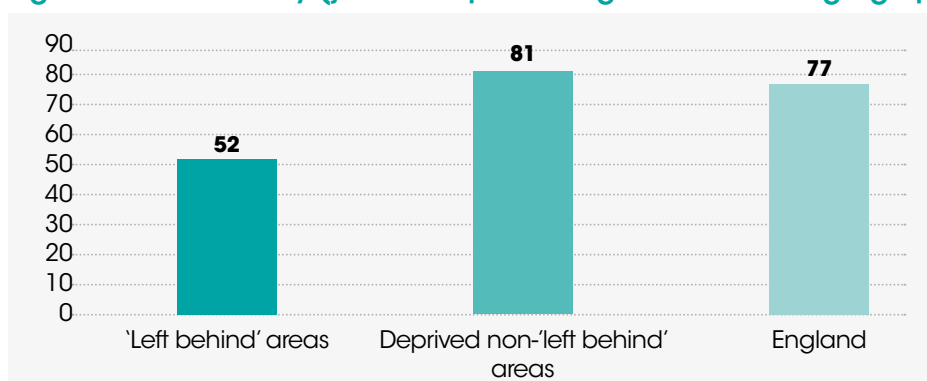
England and in coastal communities in the south and east of England.

## What differentiates 'left behind' areas from other deprived areas?

The analysis showed that these deprived areas, when combined with the absence of places to meet, the lack of an engaged community and poor connectivity, fare worse than other deprived areas. People in these areas experience worse socioeconomic outcomes including lower educational attainment, lower participation in higher education, fewer job opportunities, and worse health outcomes. People living in these communities are also suffering disproportionately from the impact of COVID-19.

## Employment and poverty

**Figure 1: Jobs density (jobs as a percentage of the working age population)**

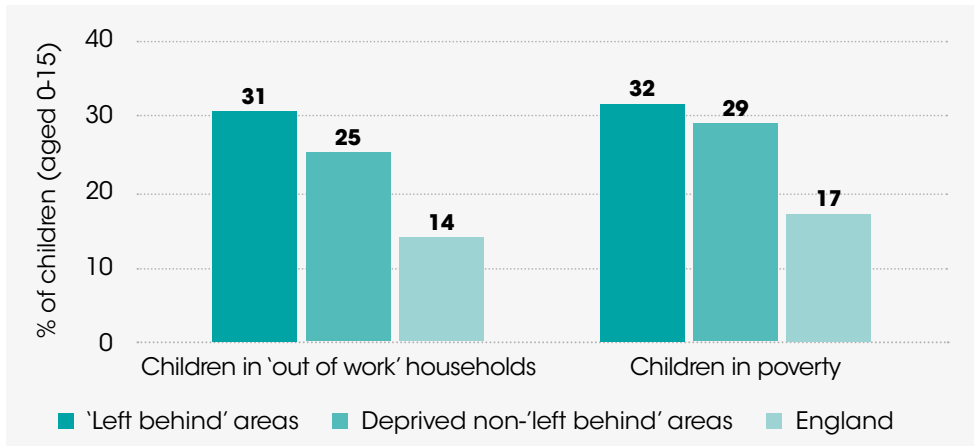


'Left behind' areas have considerably fewer local jobs compared to other poor areas (Figure 1).

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), 2018.

The graph depicts the jobs density, which measures the number of jobs found nearby as a percentage of the working age population. It shows there is a sizeable jobs deficit in 'left behind' areas, with only 52 jobs available locally per 100 people. In other deprived areas, the figure is 81.

**Figure 2: Children (aged 0-15) in poverty and 'out of work' households**

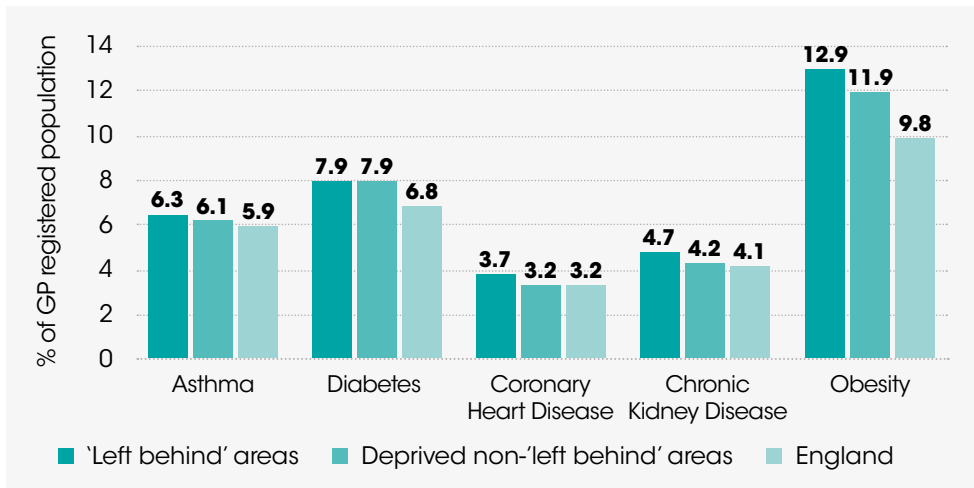


More children face poverty and live in 'out of work' households in LBNs than in similarly deprived areas (Figure 2).

Source: OCSI based on HM Revenue and Customs/Department for Work and Pensions, 2015.

## Health

**Figure 3: People with 'at risk' health conditions**

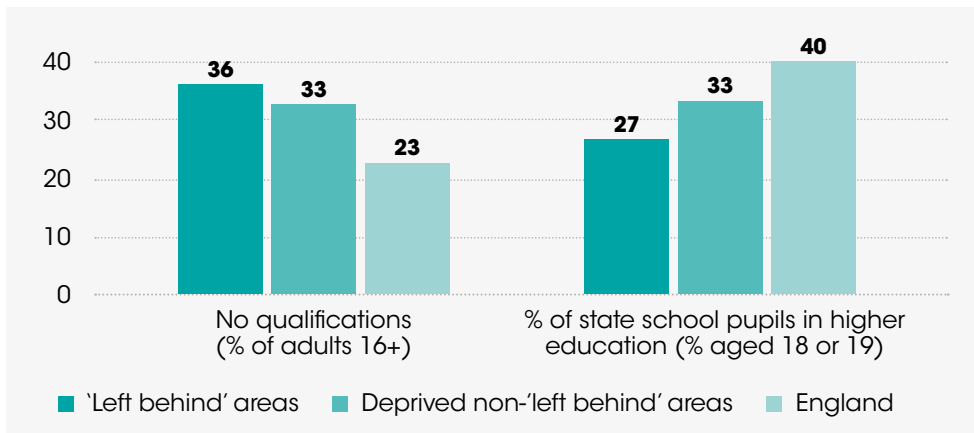


Residents in LBNs suffer from significantly worse health outcomes than those in other equally deprived communities and England as a whole (Figure 3).

Source: OCSI based on NHS Digital - from GP registers, 2017-2018.

## Education

**Figure 4: Highest level of educational attainment and % of state school pupils in higher education**



OCSI based on Department of Education (DfE), 2013-2014 and Office for Students (ONS), September 2019.

The proportion of residents in LBNs with no qualifications at all is markedly higher than other equally deprived areas. Relatedly, participation in higher education is markedly lower in LBNs compared to other equally deprived areas (Figure 4). These likely make it harder for people to gain employment, particularly employment that pays a decent wage.

## COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly impacted on 'left behind' areas. Indicators specifically looking at the pandemic and pandemic response show that:

- 1) **LBNs are much more vulnerable to the virus.**
- 2) These neighbourhoods, despite being at greater risk, have **not had the same support to deal with the pandemic.** Data from 360 Giving on 97 funders who have used the words 'COVID' or 'Coronavirus' in grant descriptions indicates that they have **received less than half the funding per head.**
- 3) Early data from COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK suggests that **fewer mutual aid groups** have been set up in LBNs.

**Figure 5: COVID-19 indicators**

	'Left behind' areas	Deprived non-'left behind' areas	England
<b>COVID-19 Vulnerability Index<sup>1</sup></b>	128	112	86
<b>COVID-19 charitable grants per 100,000 population</b>	£21,182	£50,054	£60,312
<b>Number of mutual aid groups per 100k population</b>	3.5	7.7	10.6

Sources: OCSI based on British Red Cross, 2020. OCSI based on 360 Giving, 2020. OCSI based on Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK, 2020.

## What is Local Trust doing with the research?

In 2020 an [All-Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) for LBNs](#) was launched to speak up for these neighbourhoods and develop practical solutions for them. The APPG includes a cross party group of 77 parliamentary members of which 12 are Peers of the House of Lords, and over 60 external third sector organisation members.

Local Trust acts as the secretariat for the APPG and has commissioned additional research<sup>2</sup> and evidence deep dives<sup>3</sup> to support the group's investigation into LBNs. Local Trust will continue to support the APPG to develop practical policy solutions that will help build community confidence and capacity, delivering improved social and economic outcomes for local residents.

## Consultation on the updated methodology

Local Trust's research into LBNs was not intended to be definitive or final. We proposed, as part of the research, to continue to develop the methodology, to make it more rigorous over time. This has led to the formation of an expert advisory panel, to provide insight and guidance on ways to improve the CNI. After incorporating feedback from the advisory group, Local Trust and OCSI have come up with an updated version, to provide an even more rigorous measure of community need. As part of this process, we have opened a public consultation on proposed changes. We welcome feedback from anyone interested to contribute to the consultation and ensure the new metrics continue to prompt a wider debate on the issues facing the communities it identifies. This will lay the foundations for a programme of work to develop proposals to improve their future prospects. You can contribute to the consultation at <https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research/>.

<sup>1</sup> The British Red Cross COVID-19 Vulnerability Index brings together data on clinical, demographic, and social vulnerability and health inequalities to identify neighbourhoods 'at risk' from the effects of COVID-19. Higher scores represent higher levels of vulnerability.

<sup>2</sup> You can find all the research publications at <https://www.appg-leftbehindneighbourhoods.org.uk/publications/>

<sup>3</sup> You can find all the evidence sessions at <https://www.appg-leftbehindneighbourhoods.org.uk/evidence/>