



A briefing paper for Levelling Up and 'left behind' neighbourhoods Roundtable

Event: What does levelling up mean for 'left behind' neighbourhoods?

Hosted by: Co-chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods and the Centre for Inequality & Levelling Up (CEILUP) at University of West London

When: 16:00-17:30, 22 March 2022

Where: Room C, 1 Parliament Street, Westminster SW1A 2NE

What is levelling up?

Levelling up refers to the government's ambitious programme of work aimed at 'spreading opportunity more equally across the UK'.¹ The recent Levelling Up White Paper, details government's plans for delivering on this agenda and outlines four main objectives for levelling up:

- 'Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging,
- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest,
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost and,

- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency'²

These objectives are underpinned by 12 missions that the UK government will aim to achieve by 2030 covering living standards, research & development (R&D), transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, education, skills, health, well-being, pride in place, housing, crime, and local leadership.

Funding to support levelling up was announced in 2021, including the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund - £1.69 billion of which was allocated to 85 local authorities in October 2021; the £150 million UK Community Ownership Fund; the £3.6 billion Town's Fund and the £220 million UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF). Allocations for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund that will replace EU structural

¹ UK Gov (2022) Levelling Up the United Kingdom [Online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052064/Levelling_Up_White_Paper_HR.pdf [Date accessed: 3 Feb 2022]

² Ibid.

funds and provide £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025 to deliver on the four levelling up objectives will be announced in Spring 2022. The pre-launch guidance published alongside the White Paper set out three investment priorities for the UKSPF: communities and place, local business, and people and skills.

Does the Levelling Up White Paper go far enough?

In January 2022 the Centre for Inequality & Levelling Up published 'Levelling Up – What is it and can it work?'³ which brought together contributions from some of the most prominent voices on levelling up across policy, academia, and politics. The publication detailed six principles of levelling up that would be necessary for any successful levelling up programme:

1. Devolution of power to local communities and areas in greatest need
2. Engagement of civil society
3. Recognition that no one model of place exists
4. Focus on outcomes
5. Long term financial commitments and monitoring progress
6. Avoiding competition between places and people

The recent Levelling Up White Paper suggested a commitment to most of these principles. It offered a framework for thinking about levelling up across six capitals (physical, human, intangible, financial, social, and institutional capital) and acknowledged that each local area has different needs and will require different levels of investment. The paper outlined plans for a Levelling Up Advisory Council and improved data collection

and accountability structures to monitor progress, as well as offering a new framework for extending, deepening, and simplifying devolution by inviting new areas to agree County Deals and opening negotiations for new trailblazer deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities.

The CEILUP publication also brought together key policy asks from contributors across a wide range of issues related to levelling up including New Zero, devolution, work, education, and skills among others. The White Paper met some of these asks. It highlighted the government's commitment to focusing on cities as engines of regional growth and committed to consulting on a new Community Wealth Fund, as well as promising a new Strategy for Community Spaces and Relationships, launching a review of neighbourhood governance and piloting new models for community partnerships.

However, some key areas were missing from the paper. For example, despite a mission to increase pay, employment and productivity across the UK, the paper does little to address the prevalence of low-quality work, in-work poverty, and insecure work contracts. Similarly, the paper acknowledges the link between levelling up and Net Zero but the policies outlined do little to meaningfully link the two agendas. Furthermore, the paper extended the government's commitment to lifelong learning but did not outline support for adults without Level 1 & 2 skills that are necessary to access the loans of Level 3 skills (equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or A Levels) and above.

³ CEILUP (2022) Levelling Up – What is it and can it work? [Online] Available at: https://www.uwl.ac.uk/sites/uwl/files/2022-01/CEILUP%20Report%20Levelling%20Up%20-%20What%20is%20it%20and%20can%20it%20work__0.pdf?_ga=2.130447695.1574683468.1643103399-1920473685.1641291448

Levelling up and 'left behind' neighbourhoods

'Left behind' neighbourhoods are identified by the APPG as being those communities that suffer from a combination of social and economic deprivation, as well as poor connectivity (physical and digital), low levels of community engagement, and a lack of community spaces and places. Typically located in post-industrial areas in the midlands and north of England as well as communities on the English coast, they rank amongst the most deprived 10% on both the Community Needs Index (CNI), referenced in the Levelling Up White Paper as an objective means of measuring access to social capital and infrastructure, and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Residents living in areas identified as 'left behind' experience worse outcomes across a range of indicators when compared not only to the national average, but also to other deprived areas, from the lowest levels of educational attainment to the highest mortality rates in the country.⁴ As a result, they are most in need of effective levelling up policies, and a long-term approach to achieving genuine and transformational change. Evidence presented to the APPG points to the need for local communities themselves to be key drivers of the levelling up process, with 'left behind' areas requiring support and investment directly at the local neighbourhood level to build the community confidence, capacity and social infrastructure that others areas can more readily access.

About the APPG's Inquiry into levelling up the 'left behind'

Building on the evidence base it has established in 2020-21, and informed by bespoke, newly commissioned research, written submissions and expert testimony, during 2022 the APPG will be holding an inquiry into the implications of the White Paper for communities identified as 'left behind'. As well as exploring the potential impact of policy in the White Paper in levelling up 'left behind' areas, it will also consider what else might be needed in order to successfully level up communities. For more information about the APPG and the Inquiry, please visit the [website](#) and follow the APPG on [Twitter](#).

The Centre for Inequality & Levelling Up (CEILUP)

The Centre for Inequality & Levelling Up (CEILUP) is a new research centre based at the University of West London. The centre produces policy relevant research that can shape approaches to addressing inequality in the UK. The centre focuses particularly on developing practical solutions to the challenges that face the UK in the early 21st century related to inequality in employment, education, and opportunity. CEILUP is led by Professor Graeme Atherton who has been working in the field of education research since 1995. In addition to '[Levelling Up - What is it and can it work?](#)', CEILUP recently also published a report examining the distribution of the Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund which can be found [here](#). To learn more about the Centre for Inequality & Levelling Up (CEILUP) visit their [website](#) or follow them on [Twitter](#).

⁴ Munford, Mott et al. (2022) Overcoming health inequalities in 'left behind' neighbourhoods. Northern Health Science Alliance and the APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods. [Online] Available at: <https://www.appg-leftbehindneighbourhoods.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Overcoming-Health-Inequalities.pdf>