



APPG inquiry into levelling up

Session 3: Levelling up communities

Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where it has been lost

Date: Wednesday 30th November

Time: 3.00pm – 5.00pm

Venue: Room C, 1 Parliament St

Expert witnesses:

Dr Billy Dasein, Chair, East Marsh United in Grimsby, pioneering community-led provision of local housing

Toby Lloyd, housing and regeneration policy expert and Chair of the 2020-21 No Place Left Behind Commission

Professor Sarah Pearson, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University

Ben Lee, Director, Shared Intelligence, formerly National Association for Neighbourhood Management

Angie Buss, Chair, Blackpool Revue Big Local

1. About the inquiry

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out the government's plan to spread opportunity more equally across the UK. But if this national project is to become a reality, transformational improvements will be required in those communities that need them most. This inquiry will assess the likelihood of the government achieving this goal by considering the extent to which the White Paper's policy programme aligns

with the needs and aspirations of people who live in the most deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods.

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

Each line of inquiry is structured around the levelling up focus areas and medium-term missions. Sessions will consider research measuring the current situation in 'left behind' neighbourhoods and identify key issues on which the White Paper is silent or could contain more impactful proposals. On completion of evidence gathering and analysis, the APPG will recommend measures to support a long-term, positive programme of change for communities with the most need.

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2. What this session will examine

The third session of the APPG's inquiry into levelling up will examine the White Paper's missions relating to pride in place, housing and crime. These are grouped together under the levelling up objective of "restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where it has been lost." This objective will see development and investment across institutional, social, human and physical capitals.

Focus area	Mission
<i>Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where it has been lost</i>	
Pride in place	Mission 9: By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
Housing	Mission 10: By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest-performing areas.
Crime	Mission 11: By 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.

3. Biographies

Billy Dasein, Chair, East Marsh United in Grimsby, pioneering community-led provision of local housing

Dr Billy Dasein has worked in education for much of his adult life, as a lecturer, educational technologist and teacher of English in Oman and Poland. He's passionately interested in what makes for a good life, how we organise ourselves so that we humans can flourish and live the best lives we can. His doctoral thesis 'Freedom to learn for the 21st century (education as if people mattered)', says just about everything about his being-in-the-world: <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/8553>

Toby Lloyd, housing and regeneration policy expert and Chair of the 2020-21 No Place Left Behind Commission

Toby Lloyd is a housing and regeneration policy expert and independent consultant. In 2020-21 he served as the chair of [No Place Left Behind](#): the Commission into Prosperity and Community Placemaking, set up by the Create Streets Foundation to explore the potential for community empowerment and placemaking to improve lives and neighbourhoods in left behind places. He was previously the No 10 Special Adviser on housing and local government to Prime Minister Theresa May. Toby has worked as an advisor on housing and regeneration to local councils, housing associations, developers and the Mayor of London, before spending seven years as head of policy for Shelter. In 2020-22 and his recent work was cited in the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper.

Sarah Pearson, Professor of Social Policy Research, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University

Sarah Pearson is a Professor of Social Policy Research at the Centre for Regional Economic Research and Director of the Social and Economic Research Institute (SERI) at Sheffield Hallam University.

She is an expert in community-led and neighbourhood renewal and has skills in the impact and process evaluation of social

programmes designed to improve outcomes in disadvantaged areas. She has led projects for national and local government and UK charities and foundations. Recent work includes evaluation of place-based approaches to supporting young people at risk of knife crime and violence (Youth Endowment Fund), the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund (National Lottery Community Fund), and Children's Communities (Save the Children UK). Between 2001 and 2010, she was Deputy Director of the ten-year evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme.

Ben Lee, Director, Shared Intelligence, formerly National Association for Neighbourhood Management

Ben has been involved in public policy research and development for 25 years. Much of his work relates to community renewal and public services at the neighbourhood level. He is currently on the senior team at the consultancy Shared Intelligence most often engaged in designing research, supporting organisations to evidence impact, conducting policy review, and facilitating peer learning. He works with community volunteers, public sector professionals, and elected representatives. He has also ended up being an expert on public libraries. He was a founding trustee of Local Trust from 2012 to 2020.

Angie Buss, Chair, Blackpool Revue Big Local

Angie was born in Peterborough and worked as a manager in ladies fashion retail in Newmarket, Spalding and Brixton before retiring to Blackpool in 2001. In 2012 she set up a Residents Association for Revue, an area of central Blackpool, and in 2014 joined the steering group for Revoelution, the town's Big Local project. She led one of the Council's Area Forums for several years and became Chair of the Revoelution Partnership in September 2020. Angie facilitates Partnership meetings, liaises with public sector and voluntary organisations in the area and regularly volunteers at the Revoelution Hub. She has received several awards for her work in the community including recently one from 24Housing.

4. Background

This section examines the policy programme set out in the White Paper and current performance in 'left behind' neighbourhoods. It also provides the broader context for existing government initiatives and policy approaches. For further information on the performance of 'left behind' areas across the 12 Levelling Up missions, see the accompanying research commissioned for the APPG and inquiry session 3, 'Missions 9-11: Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging.'¹

Levelling Up Mission 9: Pride in place

The Levelling Up White Paper conceptualises local pride as both a subjective individual experience – “people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community”² – and a factor which influences the look and feel of a place: “a loss of civic trust and pride are drivers of, as well as signs of, decline.”³ The policy programme’s focus is on making high streets safer and cleaner, facilitating projects to renew community infrastructure and improving access to green space in order to strengthen the social fabric of communities. Previous research for the APPG suggests that community-owned assets can boost civic pride by making residents feel like they have a stake in the local area and a voice in its development.⁴ There is also an increasing body of literature establishing the link between social infrastructure – the building block of social capital – and pride in place.⁵

White Paper Policy Programme

Regeneration

- £1.8bn fund for brownfield and infrastructure projects, with support for local leaders and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) to bring together different funding pots, departments, and agencies; refocusing Homes England’s regeneration offer and extending BHF
- Policy focus on **transformational projects** (identify and engage with 20 places to maximise regeneration); **high street rejuvenation**, with a High Streets Task Force supporting local authorities in placemaking, planning and design (allocated using the IMD and measure of retail exposure); and **green space**: focused on communities with low access, supporting local leaders and communities to reimagine urban green space, increasing parks, and access to green and blue spaces

Culture and Heritage

- Addressing disparities in access by increasing cultural investment outside London, with new Arts Council funding priorities and portfolio; identification of 100 levelling up priority places for Arts Council engagement and investment

Sport

- Improving access, facilities and infrastructure through upgrades to grass and 3G pitches; improvements to changing rooms, pavilions and other facilities, and better access for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups; supporting community ownership of football grounds and local sporting assets

¹ OCSI, 'Left behind' neighbourhoods: Performance on the 12 Levelling Up Missions, Mission 9-11 (PDF), August 2022

² Levelling Up the United Kingdom (PDF; hereafter 'LU White Paper'), p. 7

³ LU White Paper, p. 83

⁴ Renaisi, Community Asset Ownership in 'left behind' neighbourhoods (PDF), June 2021

⁵ For further reading, see: Bennett Institute for Public Policy, Public First, and Algan et al.

Supporting young people

- A National Youth Guarantee to ensure by 2025 every young person in England has access to out of school, away from home, and volunteering opportunities, with £368m targeted at areas of levels of child income deprivation and lack of youth provision; £288m capital for up to 300 new/refurbished youth facilities, reformed National Citizens Service, expanding the Duke of Edinburgh Awards programme

Empowering communities

- Building on the Volunteering Futures Fund to target places with poor social capital
- Enhanced Community Ownership Fund, learning from previous rounds
- A new Strategy for Community Spaces and Relationships, underpinned by principles of community power; understanding what works; listening to communities; and ensuring funding reaches those most disconnected and in need
- Review of neighbourhood governance, including piloting Community Covenants
- Widening access to neighbourhood planning, supporting the social economy in 'left behind' places; reforming public sector procurement to maximise social value investing in communities
- Piloting local votes for funding, with local communities deciding priorities
- Investment in community-led activity through UKSPF; reform of CIL
- Expansion of the Dormant Assets Scheme, with consultation on options including the Community Wealth Fund proposal to distribute funding to local communities

Performance in 'left behind' neighbourhoods

The Levelling Up White Paper's technical annex acknowledges that "there are considerable challenges to developing measures for pride of place" and that existing datasets "can only be broken down into very large spatial units."⁶ However, it is possible to model some of the national survey data down to small area level and supplement this analysis with broader proxy indicators to gain a richer insight into geo-spatial variations in pride in place.

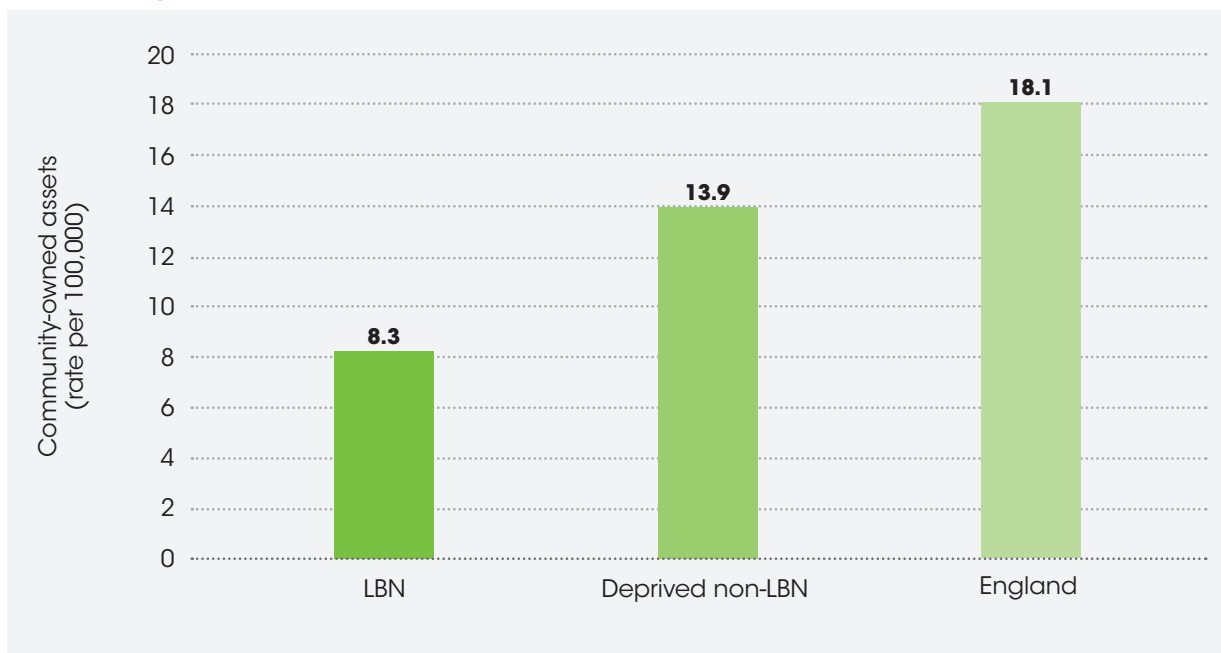
Analysis of pride in place in 'left behind' neighbourhoods (LBNs) for the APPG shows:

- 9.1% of people in LBNs are dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live, slightly below the average across other deprived areas (9.7%) but above the average across England (6.9%)
- LBNs perform less well than other deprived areas and England as a whole across all of the key measures in the Community Life Survey relating to participation and engagement in their local neighbourhood
- Local authorities containing 'left behind' neighbourhoods (LA-LBNs) have a slightly higher incidence of fly-tipping (23.0) than other deprived areas (22.8), and a higher rate than across England as a whole (20.2)
- LBNs have a considerably lower concentration of community-owned assets (8.3 per 100,000) than across Deprived non-LBNs (13.9) and England as a whole (18.1). This reflects the general lack of civic assets in LBNs relative to other deprived areas
- More than half of all LBNs (129 out of 225 – 57.3%) have no community-owned assets

⁶ LU White Paper [Technical Annex](#) (PDF), p. 35

Engagement and participation indicators	LBN	Other deprived areas	England
Not taken part in a consultation about local services or issues in your local area	87.1	86	82.7
Not a member of a local decision making group	93.9	93.4	91.9
Not been personally involved in helping out with local issue/activity	86.7	86	82.8
Not taken part in community groups clubs or organisations	21	20.2	16.6
Taking part in any civic engagement	37.7	39.3	43.2
Engaged in formal or informal volunteering in the last month	60.9	61.9	66.1
Can influence decisions affecting the local area	27.6	30.2	31.3

Community-owned assets



Source: Power to Change, Community Land Trust Network, Plunkett Foundation 2021

Broader policy context

The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill

In May 2022 the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill, which sets out a framework for levelling up and encourages government to put reducing regional disparities at the centre of decision making, was introduced.⁷ It will enable

local authorities to fill vacant commercial property through high street rental auctions and to double council tax on homes vacant for over a year. The Bill gives communities more agency to decide what is built, where, and how.

⁷ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Levelling Up and Regeneration: further information](#), May 2022

Funding pride in place

The Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in April, together with the Levelling Up White Paper, allocating money to support community programmes, local businesses, and people and skills.⁸ This £2.6 billion fund empowers local leaders to direct funding through three investment priorities, including a specific strand on communities and place. This funding stream aims to strengthen social fabric as well as local pride and belonging by boosting access to community infrastructure and projects. On top of this, the Community Ownership Fund provides £150 million over 4 years to support community groups in taking ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost.⁹

Levelling Up Mission 10: Housing

The White Paper states that “nowhere is the need for making opportunity more equal more urgent than in housing.”¹⁰ Mission 10 focuses on increasing home ownership and improving housing quality, with an aim to positively influence feelings of belonging to neighbourhoods and bring in wider benefits in terms of increased labour market participation and higher educational attainment. The rationale behind this mission also makes an explicit link between lower-quality housing and poor health outcomes, which is a particular issue for those living in deprived and ‘left behind’ areas.

White Paper policy programme

Making home ownership a reality

- Ambition of 300,000 new homes a year in England by mid-2020s, with £11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme (75% outside of London); new Help to Buy; incentives to bring empty homes into use, e.g. new council powers to apply a premium to homes left empty a year; ban on new leasehold houses; empowerment of leaseholders through leasehold and commonhold legislation

Improving housing quality

- Ending ‘no-fault’ Section 21 evictions, exploration of new minimum standards for rented homes, National Landlord Register, review Decent Homes Standard and application across all tenures; energy efficiency improvements through retrofitting poorer performing homes and those with least ability to pay; increased options for older people in unsuitable housing; renewal of focus on preventing homelessness

Reforming the planning system

- Enaction of Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission recommendations, creation of an Office for Place; simplification of local plans, promoting easier engagement with local communities; development of new models for a new infrastructure levy to benefit communities, enhanced compulsory purchase powers and support for regeneration and brownfield development

⁸ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Prospectus](#), August 2022

⁹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Community Ownership Fund: Prospectus](#), May 2022

¹⁰ LU White Paper, p. 221

Performance in 'left behind' neighbourhoods

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

- A lower proportion of housing in LBNs is in poor condition. This is likely to be linked to the age of the properties in LBNs, with a notably lower proportion of dwellings that are more than 100 years old and a lower proportion of households in the private rented sector - where a relatively high proportion of substandard housing is located¹¹
- There is a high degree of variation of housing quality within LBNs, with those in some coastal communities, where the housing stock is typically older and smaller, more likely to live in poor quality accommodation with lower levels of thermal comfort and higher levels of overcrowding
- It is reasonable to expect those living in LBNs face greater barriers to becoming first-time buyers: findings from the English Housing Survey suggest that those in the lowest income bands are least likely to become first time buyers - only 3.4% of people in the lowest income quintile are first time buyers.¹² People living in LBNs are more likely to fall within this quintile (with 224 of 225 LBNs (99.6%) having lower annual household incomes than the England average)
- Residents in LBNs have greater difficulties accessing affordable private rented accommodation than the national average

Broader policy context

Making home ownership a reality

In March 2020, the Budget confirmed a multi-year investment of £12.2 billion in the Government's 'Affordable Homes Programme', to support the construction of 180,000 new homes.¹³ Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick, later announced in September 2020 that half the new homes would be available at discounted rents, whilst the other half would be available for affordable ownership (including shared ownership).¹⁴

Streamlining the planning process

In August 2020, the Government published its much-anticipated 'Planning for the Future'¹⁵ white paper, intended to modernise the planning process and unlock land for development. By late 2021, however, planning reform had been 'paused' and the Planning Bill outlined in the 2021 Queen's Speech has not been introduced.¹⁶

More recently, a policy paper on Levelling Up and Regeneration outlines proposed legislative reforms to improve the planning system, including by giving neighbourhood plans greater weight in planning decisions and a provision that enables residents to propose developments on their street and then determine, by means of a vote, whether those developments should be given planning permission. This is meant to generate local buy-in for additional housing and promote 'densification' of existing housing stock, as well as "giv[ing] more certainty to communities that the right homes will be built in the right places."¹⁷

¹¹ 27% of dwellings in the private rented sector failed the decent home standard compared with an average of 20% of all dwellings. Source: [English Housing Survey 2016](#) (PDF)

¹² English Housing Survey, full household sample 2019/20

¹³ HM Treasury, '[March 2020 Budget](#)' (PDF), March 2020

¹⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, '[Jenrick unveils huge £12 billion boost for affordable homes](#)', September 2020

¹⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, '[White Paper: Planning for the Future](#)', August 2020

¹⁶ [Tackling the under-supply of housing](#) (PDF), Commons Library briefing CBP-7671

¹⁷ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Levelling Up and Regeneration: further information](#), May 2022

Driving up standards in the private rental sector

In June 2022, the Government published a white paper aimed at delivering 'fairer, more secure and higher quality' accommodation in the private rented sector. The paper extends the Decent Homes Standard (currently used to ensure minimum standards in social housing) to the private rental sector, confirms that Section 21 ('no-fault') evictions will be abolished, and that it will be illegal for landlords to have a blanket ban of renting to families in receipt of benefits.¹⁸

Levelling Up Mission 11: Crime

The White Paper recognises that rates of crime and anti-social behaviour are distributed unevenly across parts of the country. Crime affects how secure people feel in their local area and can erode crucial social capital – leading to negative consequences for the local economy, poverty and prospects for young people. In addition, it has detrimental impacts on the well-being of victims and can impact on the physical and mental health of people in local communities.

White Paper policy programme

Crime, drugs and serious violence

- Legal duty for partners to work together to prevent and tackle serious violence; expanded Safer Streets Fund to 2024-25 with single course of funding for practical interventions to prevent neighbourhood crime, crime in public spaces and violence against women and girls; PCCs, councils and some civil society organisations able to bid for funding of up to £0.5m per year (with match funding element); build on ten year Drugs Strategy to break supply chains; improved recovery and treatment system; and generational shift in demand; work with ADDER areas with co-ordination in a locality to stop drug users committing local crime

Sentencing

- More effective community sentencing that punishes and reduces reoffending; expansion of electronic monitoring; increase in the unpaid work delivered by offenders, placements with partners and local authorities to improve local areas and repair damage; statutory consultation duty for community involvement

Restoring order, tackling anti-social behaviour and boosting quality of life

- Legislation ensuring police have same powers to deal with noise complaints in as in Scotland; leverage Community Payback to help tackle litter, graffiti and broken windows as part of plans for a National Spring Clean; publish a new plan for antisocial behaviour and quality of life issues

Performance in 'left behind' neighbourhoods

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

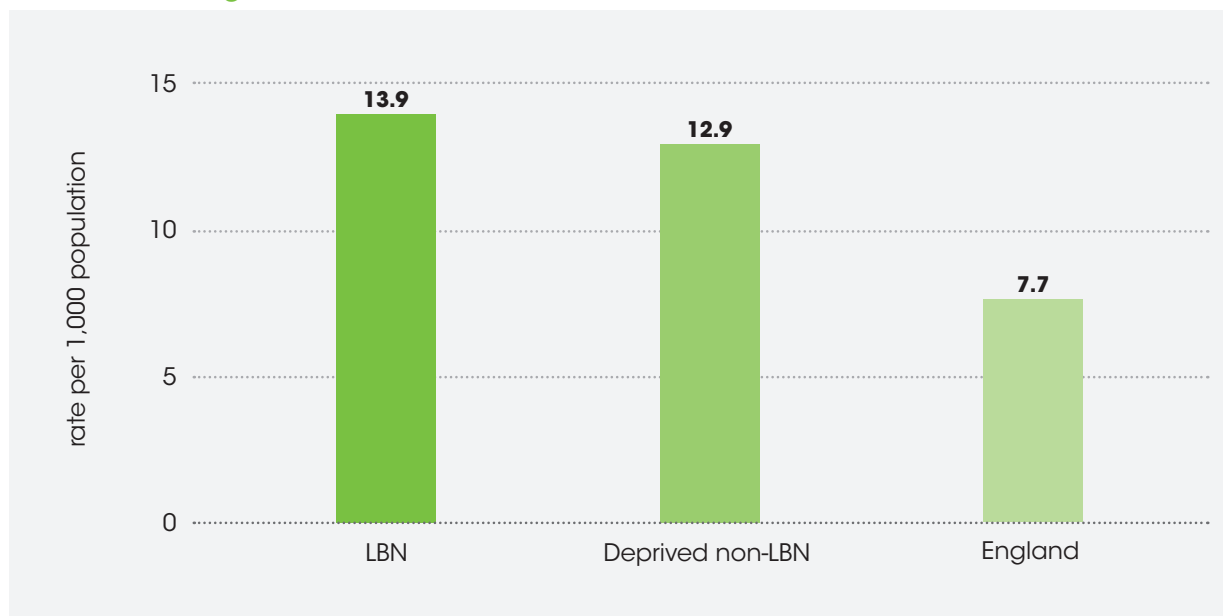
- Crime deprivation is widespread across LBNs, with 219 out of 225 LBNs (97.3%) ranked as more deprived than the national average (16,326) on the IoD 2019 crime domain. However, LBNs face similar challenges around crime compared to deprived non-LBNs, ranking as slightly less deprived on the Indices of Deprivation 2019 Crime Domain (6,692, compared to 6,538 in other deprived areas and 16,326 nationally)
- LBNs have a lower overall crime rate (125 recorded offences per 1,000 people) than other deprived areas (149.6) but above the national average (94.3)
- LBNs have particularly high levels of criminal damage (13.9 per 1,000 people), compared with other deprived areas (12.9) and England as a whole (7.7). This is likely to be associated with community needs challenges including lower levels of civic engagement and a lack of connection with their local areas

¹⁸ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 'A Fairer Private Rented Sector', June 2022

IoD 2019 Crime domain	LBNs	Deprived non-LBNs	England
IoD 2019 Crime Average rank	6,692	6,538	16,326

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government 2019

Criminal damage offences



Source: Police UK (Police recorded crime figures) June-2021 to May-2022

Broader policy context

Prisons Strategy White Paper

Released in December 2021, this paper reported the Government's investment strategy of tackling regional disparities in crime by building more and better prisons.¹⁹ This involved £3.75 billion of funding into the largest prison building programme in more than a century, providing 20,000 extra prison places, plus £550 million to tackle reoffending. Strategies for tackling reoffending include a policy focus on the drivers of crime, such as substance abuse.

The Beating Crime Plan

The Beating Crime Plan was launched in July 2021, emboldening initiatives to tackle crime.²⁰ Such initiatives included relaxing conditions of the section 60 stop

and search powers, expanding electronic monitoring, and ensuring the tracking of neighbourhood criminals upon release. Across England and Wales, police forces and local authorities are to receive a share of £23.5 million to make public spaces safer.

The Safer Streets Fund

Part of the Beating Crime Plan is the Safer Streets Fund, which totals £120 million of funding.²¹ The funding targets preventing neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour, with a particular focus on violence against women and girls. With this funding, relevant authorities can improve and expand surveillance, streetlighting, and launch initiatives which aim to change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to crime.

¹⁹ Ministry of Justice, [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#) (PDF), December 2021

²⁰ Home Office, [Beating Crime Plan](#), October 2021

²¹ Home Office, [Safer Streets Fund](#), July 2022