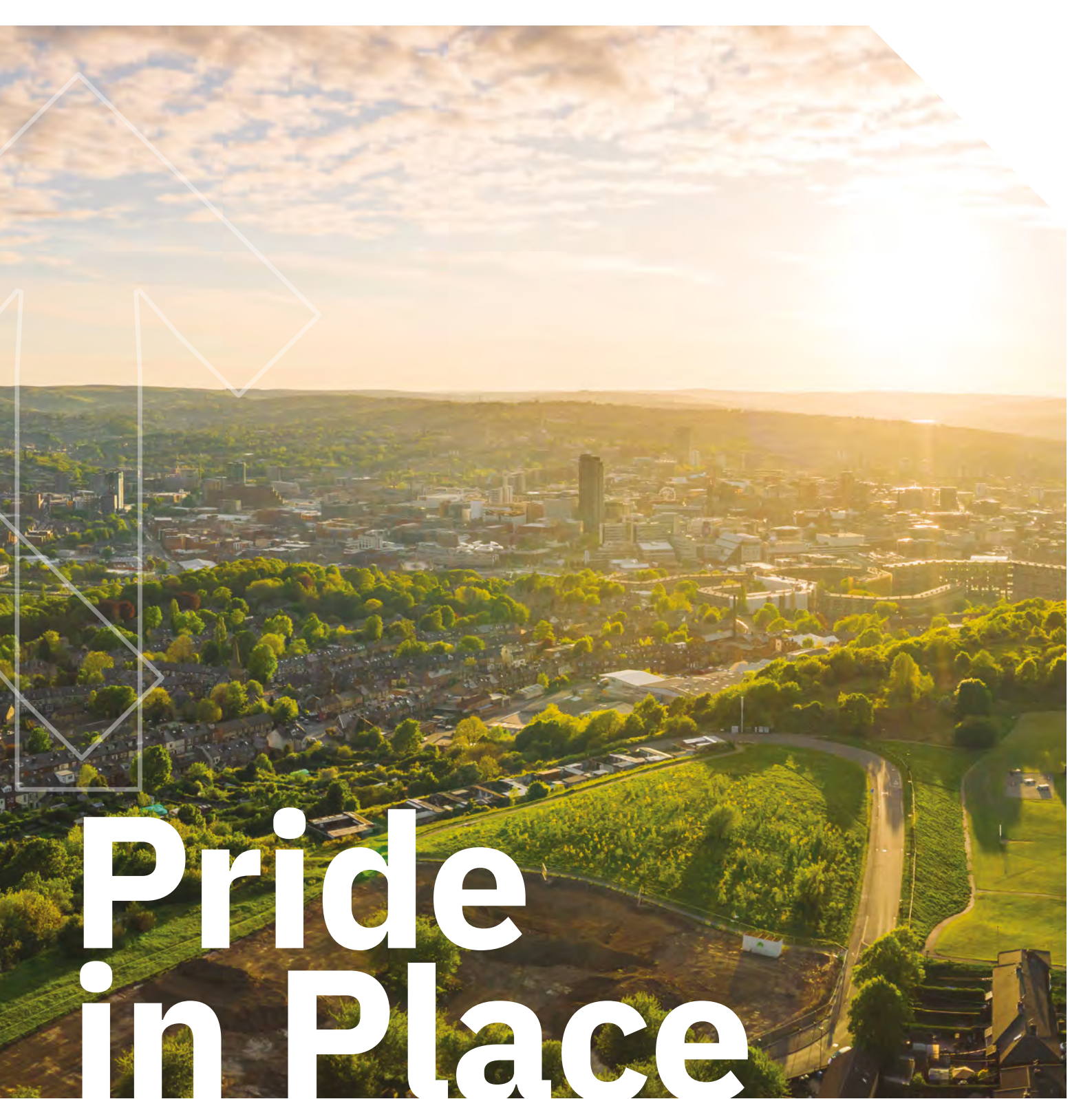




Pride in Place

Views from Northern communities

Final report | Key findings from workshops
with residents across the North of England



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Executive summary

Background

The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) commissioned Thinks Insight and Strategy to conduct research with residents and relevant stakeholders across the North of England to explore resident perspectives on pride in place at a neighbourhood level and understand the role NHC members could play in boosting pride in place. This research will play a key role in influencing activities implemented by housing associations and local authorities aimed at boosting pride in place, as well as providing a robust evidence-base for the NHC to present to Government and opposition parties.

The research comprised of five three-hour deliberative workshops across the North of England (Blackpool, Moss Side in Manchester, Prescott in Knowsley [Merseyside], Benwell in Newcastle, and Skipton in North Yorkshire). Areas were selected to ensure representation of urban, rural, and coastal communities, and included smaller and medium sized towns. Given NHC members providing social housing have a large presence in each location, workshops were based in neighbourhoods that are somewhat economically deprived. Workshops were attended by 6-10 residents and NHC member representatives. This was followed by a co-creative workshop in Leeds with residents, NHC colleagues, NHC members and relevant stakeholders. Fieldwork took place between July 17th and August 9th, 2023.

Context

Many residents are already proud of where they live, despite having criticisms and things they want to improve about it. In its most basic form, pride exists in relation to concrete positive attributes of local areas (e.g. local historic buildings), but it is also linked to less tangible attributes of a place, such as a sense of identity tied up with the local area and closeness of the local community. Pride does not denote an absence of complaints or critiques about local areas, but in most cases exists alongside these and fuels a desire to see improvements made.

Many feel powerless in decision-making as it relates to their local area and are sceptical of the Levelling Up agenda. As well as scepticism towards national politics, this is driven by a sense of different local groups being fragmented and no longer operating within the community. There is an underlying scepticism towards 'top down' decision-making generally, and the Levelling Up agenda specifically, with many reporting they are yet to see any real impact of this initiative on their areas.

Views and experiences of areas in the North

On discussing life in their local area, residents highlight a wide range of specific factors which contribute to feelings of pride in their local area (either positively or negatively). These are:

- Access to basic services
- Sense of community and decision-making
- State of the local environment

Access to basic services, such as transport, healthcare, job opportunities, personal safety and secure housing are seen as core needs that need to be met for local areas in today's world. However, these basic standards are not perceived to be met consistently (to varying degrees, depending on the specific location) in the North of England. These issues can have a direct impact on pride in place, and residents highlight these as needing immediate attention and action. The more lacking the basic services are in the local area, the higher levels of distrust there are in the Levelling Up agenda due to the view that their area has not even been equipped with the basics.

The importance of community spirit and a connection to other residents is felt to be key in creating pride in place. There is also wide-spread appetite amongst participants for further involvement and influence in decision-making at a local level to ensure that resident views are taken into account and local needs are met.

Beyond the 'basics' and more intangible aspects of feelings of community, residents discuss the importance of the broader local environment in generating pride in place. This relates to green spaces, entertainment and the aesthetics of the local area, which are particularly important for lower income neighbourhoods, in which residents are likely more dependent on free or low-cost community facilities for socialising and personal time.

The NHC is a membership organisation made up of local authorities, ALMOs and associations that provide social housing for tenants. The NHC brings its members together to share ideas and represents their interests and ensures they are heard at a regional and national government level. Thinks Insight and Strategy is an independent market research company. This work was supported by NHC member Housing Providers: Blackpool Coastal Housing, Karbon Homes, Livv Housing Group, MSV Housing Group and Yorkshire Housing.

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Building Pride in Place

In order to improve pride in place in areas across the North, there are nine key priority areas that fit into the three categories set out above:

1. Access to basic services:

- Improving access and quality of basic services
- Addressing personal safety issues
- Better waste management

2. Sense of community and decision-making:

- Tackling loneliness and isolation
- Creating opportunities for young people
- Improving resident involvement in decision-making

3. State of the local environment:

- Ensuring green spaces reach their full potential
- Tidying up neighbourhoods
- Reflecting local communities

Addressing each of these priority areas requires specific action from housing providers, local councils and national government. However, there are three overarching solutions – relating to three consistent challenges – which would aid success in each of these areas:

CHALLENGE

Fragmentation of services:

Currently, problem solving for residents is often hampered by the fragmentation of services. This can make it difficult for people to know who to reach out to when they have a problem, and can lead to them being 'passed around' to different people or organisations in their attempts to get their problems resolved. Fragmentation of services risks both duplication of work, and work or people falling 'between the cracks', while also making it more difficult to make holistic improvements to services which benefit both residents and staff.

SOLUTION

Encouraging devolution of power to a regional or local level:

Devolution of power would bring decision-making closer to the communities being impacted. This would allow for greater coordination of public services within places, reducing the number of access points residents need to use when they have a problem and creating a better experience for them. It would also allow local councils and combined authorities to operate in a way that best reflects their communities, enabling greater growth and stronger local partnerships.



CHALLENGE

A lack of capacity across public services:

A lack of available resource may prevent many public services and housing providers from addressing the challenges outlined in this report. There is a risk of teams and departments being overwhelmed by the work required, or ideas being deprioritised in favour of other, potentially more pressing issues.



SOLUTION

Rebuild local capacity and support innovative resident engagement, providing quality public services for all, and supporting all who would like to play a role in communities

Fair and sustainable funding for public services would ensure necessary provision for communities whilst also alleviating the pressure of funding gaps being displaced onto households through increased local taxes, or onto other community agencies like the third sector or housing providers. Reforms such as fair funding reviews, multi-year settlements, and local commercial and residential property tax revaluations should be explored, possibly in connection to a programme of devolution¹.

Local areas should also be supported to implement new models of community ownership and involvement which would help identify priorities and a place for residents in the neighbourhood governance which shapes their areas; self-management and local control playing an important role in driving pride in place. The Levelling Up White Paper includes a number of such initiatives which the Government should bring forward. Whilst not needing to be restricted to certain areas, Towns Boards provide an opportunity to pilot such initiatives and should be encouraged to innovate in how they support areas to develop and implement their own vision for regeneration and Levelling Up.

As part of their regulatory commitments to 'work cooperatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces', registered providers of social housing have an opportunity to work with engaged residents to develop community ownership of certain initiatives. This could include seeking out local champions and connecting with the wider community, as well as offering support in the form of tools and guidance on how to manage processes and seek other external resources like funding.

¹ Pike, A. (2023) 'Councils' last throw of the dice', The MJ, 4 September.

CHALLENGE

A lack of visibility of housing and other service providers to residents:

A lack of visibility can not only make it harder for residents to find solutions to their problems, but can also work to erode trust towards housing and other service providers as they are then deemed 'faceless'.



SOLUTION

Creating or finding community hubs:

There is clear demand for physical community hubs for residents which would improve accessibility to, and navigation of, local services through better coordination of multiagency working. Such spaces could also provide a venue for discussions with local decision makers and stakeholders like Councillors or the Police, as well as a variety of neighbourhood groups.

As recommended in the Better Social Housing Review, registered providers of social housing are well placed to drive such work, utilising community assets and combining improvements to their own neighbourhood presence with proactive partnership working and convening of other agencies². They may be able to create a community hub themselves, or work in partnership with another public sector service to access another space. Spaces that are located in close proximity to other services such as a library or GP practice, may be of most benefit to communities.

Town Boards should think about how they will be present in their communities, utilising appropriate models of community hubs, or supporting the establishment of such hubs where required, to engage and work closely with residents and stakeholders.



² The Better Social Housing Review (2022) – Access here: <https://www.bettersocialhousingreview.org.uk/>
Good practice examples of such work can be found here: <https://www.cih.org/policy/better-social-housing-review/building-community-presence>





Background and methodology

2.1 Background

Pride in place is a source of community cohesion and social capital. This pride could relate to all aspects of local life, ranging from the built environment to natural landscapes, as well as local history, culture and identity.

Fostering pride and belonging in local areas, can play a key role in reducing local and regional inequality across the UK as part of Levelling Up. By building a sense of ownership and belonging to places, local communities can be empowered to better look after their own spaces, and to take part in neighbourhood initiatives to further improve where they live.

Through its own plan, the NHC, a not-for-profit membership organisation representing Housing Associations, Local Authorities, and ALMO's across the North, is seeking to underline the importance its members have in Levelling Up and boosting pride in place.

NHC therefore partnered with Thinks Insight and Strategy, an independent market research company, to conduct qualitative research to understand:

- The northern England resident perspective on how to build pride in place.
- The role that NHC members could play in building pride in place.

This work was also supported by NHC member housing providers: Blackpool Coastal Housing, MSV Housing Group, Livv Housing Group, Karbon Homes and Yorkshire Housing.

2.2 Methodology overview

The research methodology consisted of a two-stage approach:

• Phase 1: five 3-hour deliberative workshops

with 43 local residents, NHC representatives and NHC member representatives.

- 1 workshop was conducted in each of five locations: Blackpool, Moss Side in Manchester, Prescott in Knowsley (Merseyside), Benwell in Newcastle, and Skipton in North Yorkshire. Given NHC members providing social housing have a large presence in each location, workshops were based in neighbourhoods that are somewhat economically deprived.
- 5 individual interviews were also conducted to cover last-minute workshop absences.

• **Phase 2: a final co-creation workshop** was held in Leeds and involved 10 residents who took part in the initial workshop phase plus representatives from the NHC, NHC members and wider stakeholders.

- The stakeholders included representatives from The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, TPAS Tenant Engagement Experts, the Housing Diversity Network, and Same Skies the citizen-led regional democracy network and think tank for West Yorkshire.

2.3 Sample overview

Phase 1: Deliberative workshops:

In total, 38 residents took part in the Phase 1 deliberative workshops and five residents took part in individual interviews. Each workshop contained a mix of local residents designed to be broadly representative of the local area. The 43 participating residents included a mix of demographics and rental status as shown below:

	Location	
	Benwell	8
	Prescot	8
	Skipton	8
	Moss Side	10
	Blackpool	9
	Age	
	18-25	3
	25-34	11
	35-54	12
	55+	17
	Gender	
	Male	20
	Female	23
	Ethnicity	
	White	35
	Ethnic minority	8
	SEG	
	ABC1	10
	C2DE	33
	Tenancy type	
	Social	34
	Private	9

Residents were recruited through the housing provider in their local area, each of which took a slightly different approach to engage with their residents. This was combined with a free-find approach of using local recruiters and housing organisations in each location to find private rental sector (PRS) tenants.

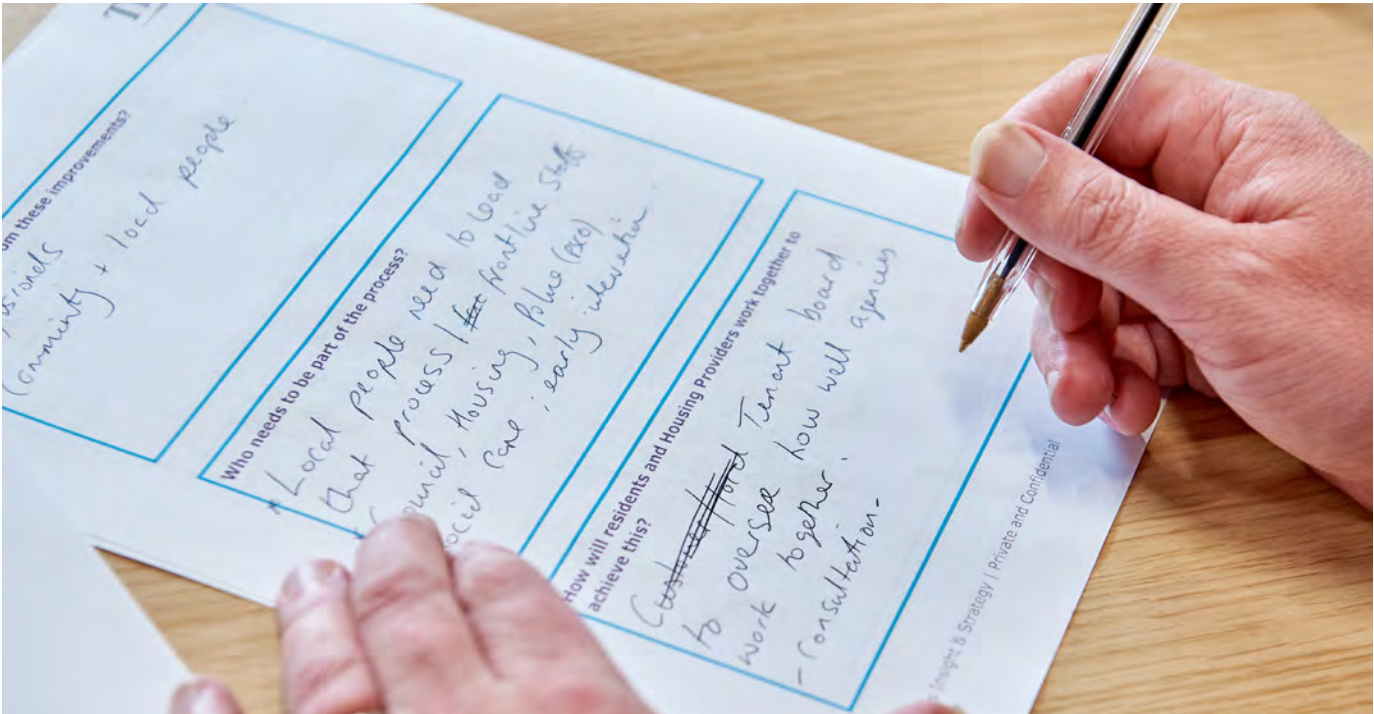
The full sample details for each location can be found in the appendix.

Phase 2: Co-creation workshop:

10 residents from the deliberative workshops were invited to attend the co-creation workshop in Leeds. The participants were chosen based on their levels of engagement in the deliberative workshops, and to ensure we had a representative sample.

Alongside residents, NHC colleagues, NHC member representatives, and stakeholders from DLUHC, Housing Diversity Network, and Same Skies also took part in the co-creation workshop. A full list of the co-creation workshop attendees can be found in the appendix.

	Location	
	Benwell	1
	Prescot	2
	Skipton	2
	Moss Side	3
	Blackpool	2
	Age	
	18-25	0
	25-34	5
	35-54	2
	55+	3
	Gender	
	Male	5
	Female	5
	Ethnicity	
	White	7
	Ethnic minority	3
	SEG	
	ABC1	2
	C2DE	8
	Tenancy type	
	Social	8
	Private	2







**Context: Views on pride in place
and local decision-making**

3.1 Current attitudes to pride in place

Pride is an important feeling for residents across the North, even if not always articulated directly using this specific language. Many residents are already proud of where they live, finding it easy to highlight the things that they love about their neighbourhood, and demonstrating a strong sense of connection to place.

In its most basic form, pride exists in relation to concrete positive attributes of local areas, including:

- The local heritage and history of an area, such as industry, buildings, historical events and independent shops or places to eat.
- Unique shops, restaurants and cafes, especially those offering goods with a local connection.
- The surrounding landscape and perceived natural beauty of an area, such as coastal walks or green spaces.

These attributes act as clear-cut examples which residents can point to as demonstrations of 'good' things about where they live that are easy for others to recognise.

However, pride is also closely tied to less tangible attributes of a place, which are often only felt and appreciated by residents themselves. These include:

- A sense of personal identity and history being tied up with the local area e.g. having grown up there, or having family nearby.
- A connection to local people and the sense of community.
- Hyper-local customs and culture.

"This area is loud, scenic and beautiful – I'm very lucky to live here. I live near a lot of older and disabled people and they're beautiful souls. If my child is crying at stupid o'clock in the morning someone will knock and ask if I need anything. It's lovely."

Prescot Resident

"I like the venue because it feels very inclusive. It's a cultural meeting hub. I don't go all the time, but whenever I do go I feel very embraced by the culture."

Moss Side Resident

These factors can help to explain why an area may be seen as a challenging place to live, but for residents remains a desirable place to live, and is seen to offer something worth celebrating.

As such, pride does not denote an absence of complaints or critiques about local areas. In most cases, it not only exists alongside it, but can actually be fuelled by more negative aspects. This is most apparent in terms of the reputation or stigma that 'outsiders' may have of a place, which can make residents feel more protective of where they live. It is also evident in residents' genuine desire to improve those things they perceive as working less well, to ensure their area meets its full potential.

For many residents across the North, there is a feeling that their neighbourhoods have been lacking investment for decades despite being in clear need of it, and as such are at risk of being left behind economically, socially and culturally. More detail on the specific improvements people wish to see are detailed in section 5 of this report.

Despite a relatively consistent picture in terms of overall pride in place, each location featured in this research is unique in terms of the specific factors that shape pride in and views of the area. These are pulled out where appropriate throughout the report.

"It seems like we are in a community helping each other, but outside people think the area is rubbish. There's stereotyping about it, it used to be thought of as a 'no-go' area."

Moss Side Resident

3.2 Views of local decision-making

There is a consistent view amongst residents of powerlessness in decision-making as it relates to their local area. As well as scepticism towards national politics, this is driven by a view of different locally operating groups being fragmented, struggling to 'join up' and make unified decisions.

This is seen to extend across all types of decision-makers, ranging from community and charity organisations, housing providers, local government and national government, although many residents struggle to specify who is leading on decisions for their local area.

This feeling is compounded by a sense that:

- These decision-makers are no longer 'present in the community' (for example, many older residents recall a time when local councillors were visible within the area, which is now no longer felt to be the case).
- Residents feeling they have very few touchpoints with organisations, particularly local and national government.

- For some, a lack of trust in not just decision-makers, but authority figures more widely (e.g. police).

"The police aren't visible in the area. I think there should be more people that you can see and speak to if you need to."

Moss Side Resident

As a consequence, many residents feel as though their voices are not heard or reflected in either the decision-making process or in attached outcomes. They feel disconnected from these processes, and struggle to feel as though they can have any real or significant 'impact' on their local area, resulting in a reduced sense of ownership of the place they live in.

3.3 Understanding and views of Levelling Up

Across all locations, there is a real sensitivity to the language of Levelling Up. This is a familiar term, particularly with older residents, and one that is heard regularly in the news, often specifically in relation to the North.

However, most are sceptical towards the term, describing it more as a catchphrase than a visible agenda.

This scepticism is driven by:

- A perceived lack of visible evidence of the agenda in action i.e. initiatives and developments within their area.
- A view that the agenda is a 'top down' approach of implementing policy in areas like theirs in the North – i.e. London-based politicians setting the agenda for areas in the North that they are perceived to have insufficient knowledge of or connection to.
- The term's current Conservative Government, which many of these areas have long-established scepticism towards.

"That's the problem I have with 'levelling Up', I don't know what ways the levelling up is being done, who's doing the levelling up and who's been levelled up. What would levelling up look like here?"

Benwell Resident





Views and experiences
of areas in the North

4.1 Overview of key factors

On discussing life in their local area, residents highlight a wide range of specific factors which, if prevalent, contribute to feeling pride in their local area. Conversely, a lack of these factors contributes to a sense of shame in the local area and a desire to address these.

These range of factors fall into three key categories:



Details on each of these factors can be found in the next sections.

4.2 Access to basic services

Access to basic services, such as transport, healthcare, job opportunities, personal safety and secure housing are seen as core needs that need to be met for local areas in today's world. However, these basic standards are not perceived to be met consistently (to varying degrees, depending on the specific location) in the North of England.

Essential to pride

Transport: In more inner city or suburban locations transport is seen to be efficient and well-connected. Residents are able to access nearby towns and cities quickly and cheaply, expanding the job opportunities available to them. Residents in more rural locations report being very reliant on their own private transport due to perceived limited public transport.

Personal safety: Prevalence of crime concerns are particularly frequent in more urban locations. Both a lack of opportunities and poverty are seen to significantly contribute to crime in the local area, and lead to residents feeling concerned about walking the streets, particularly in the evening. This is further exacerbated by a perceived lack of police presence in urban areas, strengthening a perception of neglect. Personal safety is a less front-of-mind concern in non-urban environments.

Housing: Residents feel that decent and affordable housing is a basic standard for people to live healthy and functioning lives but is not currently felt to be being met consistently, both within neighbourhoods and across the North generally. While many report being happy with their housing conditions, a notable minority of social and private housing tenants across locations reference having poor housing conditions or know of someone living with these issues. Support in addressing these issues is also felt to be hard to access at times:

- More basic issues that only require 'transactional' interactions (e.g. being able to solve the issue online or via a quick phone call) appear to work okay.
- However, more complex or ongoing issues – for example something which requires an in-person visit – are felt to be too more challenging to resolve, with reports of challenges in determining who to contact, and slow responses from housing providers.

Rubbish collection and littering: While not specifically mentioned in some areas, these issues are seen as front-of-mind and significant issues in others. The high prevalence of rubbish, litter and fly-tipping are seen to be a clear and visual representation of a lack of care and pride for the local area, contributing to a sense of shame for living where they live.

"The last bus out of the town centre is 2:40. So if anybody's relying on public transport to get to and from work? No chance."

Skipton Resident

"I've seen beds and sofas actually dumped in the lake! Then there's an old street sign poking out of it. The lake is so dirty"

Prescot Resident

"That area used to have loads of takeaways and shisha, but it's changed a lot. There's a lot of crime there now, so I don't really go there. It used to be a good family environment before, but there's a lot of drugs there now. Here is a lot better, a bit more family orientated"

Moss Side Resident

"I know people on the estate who have been in a property 30 years – no new windows, no new bathrooms, no new kitchens, nothing"

Resident at co-creation workshop

Areas that require improvement

Job opportunities: These are seen to be lacking more consistently across all locations, with most relying on the large towns and cities nearby for employment. While the good transport links make this a possibility, the lack of job opportunities specifically within local neighbourhoods is seen as having a negative impact on the community engagement. Some also reference their neighbourhoods becoming commuter towns, and the sense of community spirit and connection diminishing as a result.

Healthcare: While access to healthcare is seen to be a national issue, the building of additional housing estates and growing local populations are seen to be a further strain on local healthcare services.

"I've noticed that a lot of kids come out of college and they've done all of the degrees and things like that, but they're still not getting stuff on for work. I think something like that employment assistance case study³ in this area would be good, somewhere people could go and get help signing on at the job centre."

Prescot Resident

These issues can have a direct impact on pride in place, and residents highlight these as needing immediate attention and action. The more lacking the basic services are in the local area, the higher levels of distrust there are in the Levelling Up agenda due to the view that their area has not even been equipped with the basics.

4.3 Sense of community and decision-making

The importance of the community spirit and a connection to other residents is felt to be key in creating pride in place. There is also wide-spread appetite amongst participants for further involvement and influence in decision-making at a local level to ensure that resident views are taken into account and local needs are met.

Essential to pride

Friendly and caring communities: Many residents feel they live in warm, hospitable places where neighbours support one another. Recognition of difficulties faced by neighbours is seen to create a strong community feel where residents look out for one another and feel involved in wanting to improve the local area. Community spirit is a key driver in generating pride in place.

Local community events, spaces and courses:

While awareness and usage of such initiatives is not universal, some highlight them as being core to the community spirit. These include cookery courses and children's play time, CV and job application support, and football therapy. These initiatives are highly valued by those who attend them and participants feel they contribute to their sense of pride in the local area and in its people. However, many feel more could be done to further engage wider community members.

Diversity of local population: Residents in more urban locations highlight the increasing diversity in its local population as a benefit to the local area.

Bringing new cultures, views, and food to the local area is seen as a positive on the whole. However, some feel this has resulted in isolated groups forming and a lack of full integration.

Local heritage and history: Residents across the North tend to feel connected to their local area's history and heritage. In one area a famous castle was referenced as holding historical importance, and another was noted for its fame in watchmaking. These tend to be key drivers of pride, and residents are keen to celebrate and talk about their local heritage.

"I feel proud of the history of the place. The castle is over 1,000 years old and is one of the best-preserved castles in the UK. That alone is magnificent. The church as well, there's a lot of history in the place."

Skipton Resident

"I went to the watch factory for a beginner course, and all the residents can come to it if they want to. It does feel like a community when we're all together, and you go in the cafe and everyone is talking. That's the sort of thing the elderly really need."

Prescot Resident

Areas that require improvement

Opportunities for young people: Initiatives such as youth clubs, activities and self-development courses are seen to be few and far between across the locations. This is seen to contribute to anti-social behaviour such as littering, loitering, drug consumption, and crime. Coupled with limited job opportunities, residents feel empathy for young people and that more could be done to support this cohort to lead fulfilling lives and realise their potential.

A lack of local decision-making: There is little resident involvement in decisions regarding the local community, funding allocation and in running community events and courses. Beyond participation, local residents are unclear on how they can get more involved in community events and obtain funding for these, despite there being a willingness for this type of involvement. Residents understand the importance of participatory decision-making to ensure local needs are met.

Division in local communities: Currently, whilst many report feeling a sense of locals generally being friendly and caring about where they live, this can be inconsistent. Many older residents also report feeling that this has gotten worse over time.

³ <https://www.stockporthomes.org/advice-support/employment-support/>

Residents feel that communities can feel fragmented and disconnected, with a notable division and a perceived lack of cohesion in particular between young and older people as well as other groups, such as people from different nationalities.

"A lot of these younger kids, they don't really have anything. They probably need some kind of club or something. They shut all the youth clubs down."

Moss Side Resident

"Not everybody uses social media. Some people can't read very well you know, some elderly people can't get out. The whole thing, I think, is in communication and making things more accessible and then you get the support back from residents."

Prescot Resident

4.4 State of the local environment

Beyond the 'basics' and more intangible aspects of feelings of community, residents discuss the importance of the broader local environment in generating pride in place. This relates to green spaces, entertainment and the aesthetics of the local area, which are particularly important for lower income neighbourhoods, in which residents are likely more dependent on free or low-cost community facilities for socialising and personal time.

Essential to pride

Access to green spaces: Parks and other areas of greenery in local areas are reported by residents to be important for their physical and mental health. Across locations, residents highlight the importance of having green spaces to walk the dogs, take the kids out, do exercise and socialise with other community residents. In more rural locations, access to nature, wildlife and rural walks is cited as a key benefit of living in the local area. While not to the same extent, those in the more urban and suburban locations also note having access to green space – including parks, commons and woods – as a benefit of their local area.

Historical buildings and landmarks: Residents note that they are proud of the historical buildings and landmarks in their local areas. Having local landmarks and emblems of their area creates positive associations, while reminding people of the area's rich history. Residents highlight a need for these buildings to be maintained, protected and enhanced for people to benefit from now and in the future. Residents in one location highlight the town being a tourist destination and a recognised area of beauty as something which further bolsters pride in place.

Local amenities: Many report having easy access to good quality pubs, restaurants and shops which create social atmospheres and contribute to a strong sense of community. They are also seen to provide jobs and contribute to the local economy.

"You find rare jewels in the shops round here, like jewellery and dresses or perfume, like different things that I don't think you'd find anywhere else unless you travelled far, over distant lands. It's really nice."

Moss Side Resident

"I would say in the park there are places for community, but when you look at new apartment blocks now there's no community meeting place."

Prescot Resident

Areas that require improvement

The maintenance of green spaces: Most feel the green spaces near them could be better kept and utilised. The perceived lack of infrastructure and facilities mean green spaces are seen as not being used to their full potential, and that they could be made into community hubs. It is felt that investing in infrastructure such as play areas, exercise facilities and benches would increase use of these spaces and benefit the local area.

The maintenance of buildings: There is perceived to be a high prevalence of derelict buildings and neglected areas across most locations. As with the presence of rubbish, these are seen as clear visual representations of a lack of care or pride in the local area from local councils and the government. Derelict buildings and neglected areas are also seen to encourage anti-social behaviour such as loitering, littering and defacing walls with graffiti. This is also seen as having an important role in wider perceptions of the local area amongst those living in other areas of the country, creating negative associations and perceptions of the local area.

Underused buildings: In some areas there was seen to be an abundance of vacant shops or other buildings, which residents feel are a wasted opportunity that suggest their area is not somewhere people want to start a business in, or is not a viable place to do so. High streets with a variety of shops, selling unique goods with some form of local connection (either locally owned or connected to the community or local heritage), were seen as the most desirable and a source of pride. Large national retailers were seen as less desirable.

"It's a massive shop that's been empty for about five years. You tend to have a lot of locally owned businesses in Skipton, and we try to keep out big chains. We don't want to look like every other high street."

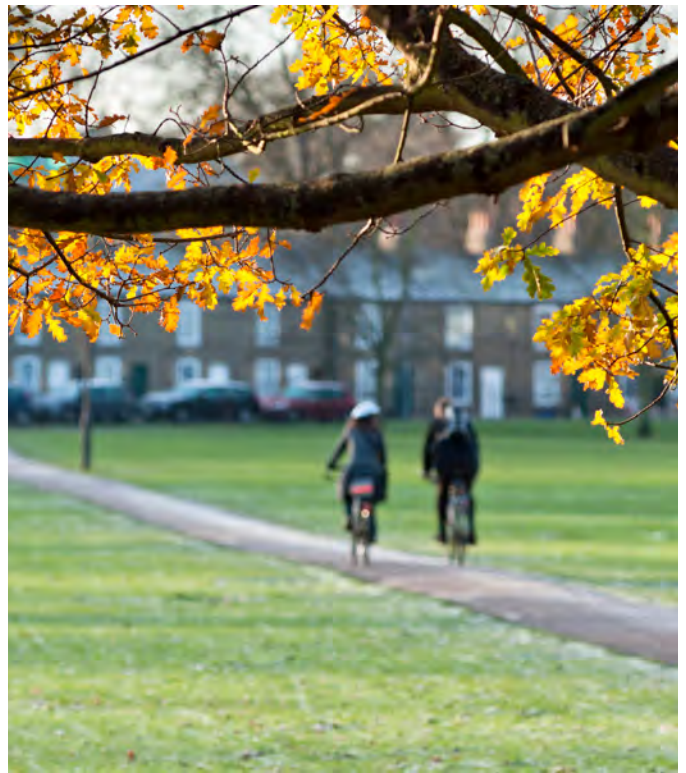
Skipton Resident

"I feel like the park is quite a small space, and it's not a very good park. I have grandchildren, and it feels like there's nothing there in the park. It's just a bit of grass."

Benwell Resident

"It's like when I see graffiti on the walls, I don't even know where to start. I rang the council but couldn't get through to anyone. It would be good to just know what services there are and how to access them."

Resident at co-creation workshop



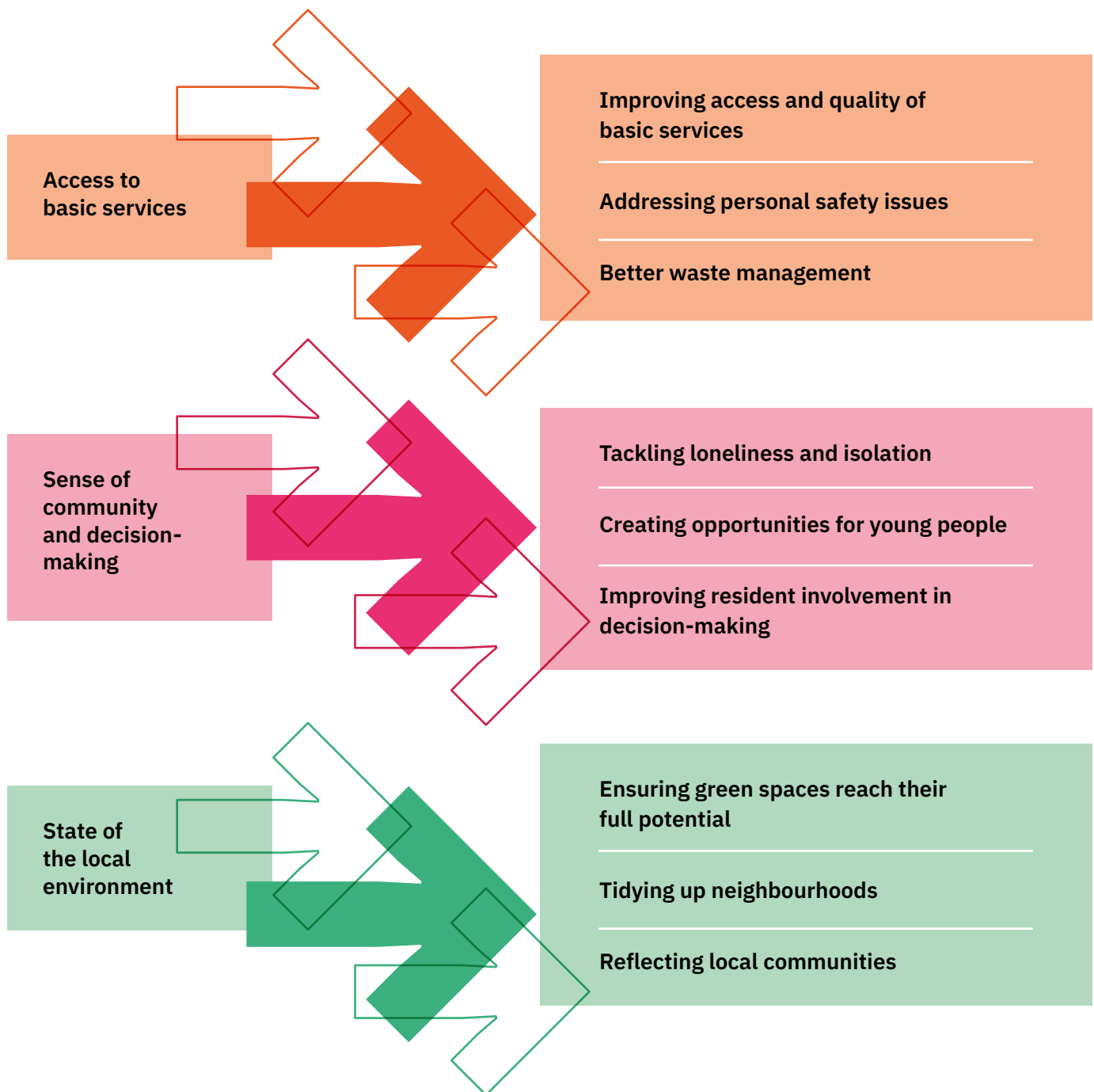


Building Pride in Place: Co-created solutions for change

5.1 Overview of priority areas to be addressed

Using each of these three pillars as a starting point, nine areas were identified that were felt to be the biggest priorities across the North in improving pride in place.

These are:



The following sections outline recommended approaches for addressing each of these priority outcomes. These recommendations are informed by a combination of input from residents, the NHC, NHC members and external stakeholders.

5.2 Addressing priority areas: Overarching solutions

In assessing these priority areas, several consistent challenges emerge, which threaten to halt progress in improving pride in place. As such, there are a series of overarching solutions which, if implemented, would aid the success of the specific priority areas discussed in more detail in the following section.

These are:

CHALLENGE

Fragmentation of services:

Currently, problem solving for residents is often hampered by the fragmentation of services. This can make it difficult for people to know who to reach out to when they have a problem, and can lead to them being 'passed around' to different people or organisations in their attempts to get their problems resolved. Fragmentation of services risks both duplication of work, and work or people falling 'between the cracks', while also making it more difficult to make holistic improvements to services which benefit both residents and staff.

SOLUTION

Encouraging devolution of power to a regional or local level:

Devolution of power would bring decision-making closer to the communities being impacted. This would allow for greater coordination of public services within places, reducing the number of access points residents need to use when they have a problem and creating a better experience for them. It would also allow local councils and combined authorities to operate in a way that best reflects their communities, enabling greater growth and stronger local partnerships.



CHALLENGE

A lack of capacity across public services:

A lack of available resource may prevent many public services and housing providers from addressing the challenges outlined in this report. There is a risk of teams and departments being overwhelmed by the work required, or ideas being deprioritised in favour of other, potentially more pressing issues.



SOLUTION

Rebuild local capacity and support innovative resident engagement, providing quality public services for all, and supporting all who would like to play a role in communities

Fair and sustainable funding for public services would ensure necessary provision for communities whilst also alleviating the pressure of funding gaps being displaced onto households through increased local taxes, or onto other community agencies like the third sector or housing providers. Reforms such as fair funding reviews, multi-year settlements, and local commercial and residential property tax revaluations should be explored, possibly in connection to a programme of devolution⁴.

Local areas should also be supported to implement new models of community ownership and involvement which would help identify priorities and a place for residents in the neighbourhood governance which shapes their areas; self-management and local control playing an important role in driving pride in place. The Levelling Up White Paper includes a number of such initiatives which the Government should bring forward. Whilst not needing to be restricted to certain areas, Towns Boards provide an opportunity to pilot such initiatives and should be encouraged to innovate in how they support areas to develop and implement their own vision for regeneration and Levelling Up.

As part of their regulatory commitments to 'work cooperatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces', registered providers of social housing have an opportunity to work with engaged residents to develop community ownership of certain initiatives. This could include seeking out local champions and connecting with the wider community, as well as offering support in the form of tools and guidance on how to manage processes and seek other external resources like funding.

⁴Pike (2023)

CHALLENGE

A lack of visibility of housing and other service providers to residents:

A lack of visibility can not only make it harder for residents to find solutions to their problems, but can also work to erode trust towards housing and other service providers as they are then deemed 'faceless'.



SOLUTION

Creating or finding community hubs:

There is clear demand for physical community hubs for residents which would improve accessibility to, and navigation of, local services through better coordination of multiagency working. Such spaces could also provide a venue for discussions with local decision makers and stakeholders like Councillors or the Police, as well as a variety of neighbourhood groups.

As recommended in the Better Social Housing Review, registered providers of social housing are well placed to drive such work, utilising community assets and combining improvements to their own neighbourhood presence with proactive partnership working and convening of other agencies⁵. They may be able to create a community hub themselves, or work in partnership with another public sector service to access another space. Spaces that are located in close proximity to other services such as a library or GP practice, may be of most benefit to communities.

Town Boards should think about how they will be present in their communities, utilising appropriate models of community hubs, or supporting the establishment of such hubs where required, to engage and work closely with residents and stakeholders.



⁵ The Better Social Housing Review (2022) – Access here:
<https://www.bettersocialhousingreview.org.uk/>

Good practice examples of such work can be found here:
<https://www.cih.org/policy/better-social-housing-review/building-community-presence>



5.3 Addressing priority areas: Access to basic services

Residents across the North want to see these basics being consistently delivered. Making improvements in this area is seen as the first layer that needs to be delivered in order to generate pride in place. Information about support feels scattered, and there is a perceived lack of collaboration between different organisations, resulting in the sense that no one party is accountable or taking responsibility. Residents describe a feeling of being ‘passed

around’ between services and it taking too long to get the information they need.

This area is high priority across all locations, although different aspects are emphasised as more important depending on what is seen as lacking (for example, some geographies may feel crime or waste management is a particular issue in their area).

Recommendations for addressing this priority outcome:

PRIORITY AREA: IMPROVING ACCESS AND QUALITY OF BASIC SERVICES

What residents told us:

Their quality of life is significantly hampered by low access to or poor standards of the fundamentals, such as housing, healthcare and career opportunities.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Signposting residents to basic services, and establishing a way to check in on progress.**
Signposting should be conducted via a range of media – such as online, paper copy, and accessible versions – to ensure no resident is excluded from accessing support. It should also go further than just directing residents to the services they need, instead establishing a housing provider representative as their go to person should they require further assistance on their journey.
- **Co-operating with relevant partners** at both a strategic and operational level to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing as set out under the local co-operation section of the Regulator of Social Housing’s (RSH) current and proposed consumer standards. Specifically, residents expect a referral process to be introduced to facilitate the request process and ensure the system is joined-up, including with the healthcare system.
 - As suggested, a physical community space could host such partnership working in neighbourhoods. The Better Social Housing Review identified housing providers as potential catalysts for such work, and CIH have provided a range of good practice case studies to share learning⁶.
 - In Sunderland, SARA (Southwick Altogether Raising Aspirations), brings together representatives from the local authority, police, social services, housing, education and health all based in one place to provide effective and streamlined support to residents⁷.
- **Providing employability services** to local residents by offering key skills training, and providing incentives to support people into careers.

⁶ The Better Social Housing Review (2022) – Access here: <https://www.bettersocialhousingreview.org.uk/>

Good practice examples of such work can be found here:

<https://www.cih.org/policy/better-social-housing-review/building-community-presence>

⁷ <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/17689/Let-s-Talk-SARA>

<https://beta.northumbria.police.uk/latest-news/2020/september/ground-breaking-new-sara-project-launched-to-rejuvenate-southwick-and-offer-support-to-the-communities-who-live-there/>

⁸ <https://www.tynehousing.org.uk/henne/>

⁹ <https://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/careers/new-start/>

¹⁰ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/building-opportunity-how-social-housing-can-support-skills-talent-and-workforce-development/>

¹¹ <https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/news/the-nhc-host-the-regulator-for-a-site-visit-tour-across-greater-manchester/>

- A route to doing this could be to replicate the Housing Employment Network North East (HENNE)⁸, in which an employability partnership was launched between 12 local housing associations to deliver a coordinated strategic approach to employability by supporting tenants and residents. This gave tenants direct access to the local labour market and engaged those who are economically inactive to explore how they can prepare for, find, and secure quality jobs.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Creating a neighbourhood association or forum** – which is supported by housing providers and has resident representation.
- **Directly providing work opportunities** (such as placements and apprenticeships).
 - An example to be replicated comes from Karbon Homes, who recently developed an employability programme called New Start⁹ which provided paid work placements for over 25s, building on the Government's Kickstart scheme aimed at 16–24-year-olds.
 - Housing providers should also seek to follow the Learning & Work Institute's guidance¹⁰ on how social housing can support skills, talent and workforce development, for example trialling the 'Jobs Plus' model.

National government could help address this by:

- **Finding ways for existing funding** – such as National Lottery's Community Fund and the Community Ownership Fund – to reach people and communities who are interested but not already engaged, helping to mature the voluntary and community sector across the region.
- **Taking steps to make broader improvements** to healthcare to ensure that healthcare needs are met consistently and in a timely manner, while removing healthcare inequalities. Additional funding, greater efficiencies in the healthcare system and devolving powers to local and regional levels are the primary routes to achieving this outcome and ensuring localised strategies are implemented.
 - At The Depot regeneration site in Moss Side, a partnership between MSV and Manchester City Council provides specialist apartments that help speed up hospital discharge for older people by offering short-term, suitable accommodation. Managed by the Council's Reablement Team, the scheme is one of a number established across Manchester¹¹.
- Encouraging Town Boards to think about how they will be present in their communities, utilising appropriate models of community hubs, or supporting the establishment of such hubs where required, to engage and work closely with residents and stakeholders. The Prime Minister's Towns Taskforce will be equally well placed to share good practice and learning nationally.



PRIORITY AREA: ADDRESSING PERSONAL SAFETY ISSUES

What residents told us:

Issues of personal safety – both in terms of crime and the impact of busy roads – makes neighbourhoods less enjoyable to be in.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Sharing best practice on how providers are demonstrating meeting regulator requirements**, including existing consumer regulations that state: 'registered providers must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing'.¹²
- **Running risk assessments of local areas** to increase overall understanding of existing rates of antisocial behaviour, crime and road traffic incidents and people's feelings of safety. Working with the local Police and Crime Commissioner to build on existing local level data and pool resources, alongside using the ONS Perceptions of Personal Safety Dataset¹³ to better understand people's priorities.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Supporting neighbourhood efforts** to transform spaces that residents have identified as less safe.
 - An example many residents would like to see replicated is the Moss Side Green Alleyways project¹⁴, which was a resident driven initiative to transform the local alleyways from neglected spaces into green spaces. Though this may be seen as beautification, residents reported feeling that by demonstrating that an area is looked after, and cared for, that it would also feel safer.
- **Designing out crime** when contributing to new housing developments and urban planning. This may be achieved through layout design choices, ensuring there is enough lighting and/or CCTV cameras in key locations and using natural lines that people naturally want to walk along. This could also be taken further through ensuring there are enough spaces of sociability, which provide formal spaces to meet as opposed to 'loitering'.
- **Establishing working groups with relevant parties and organisations** (e.g. local council, police) to ensure greater collaboration in tackling issues of personal safety.
- **Seeking out national government and MP support** to help with initiatives that address personal safety.

National government could help address this by:

- **Ensuring the new Decent Homes Standard¹⁵ includes non-statutory guidance on neighbourhood safety and security**, covering issues such as CCTV and appropriate lighting.
 - To ensure local needs are met, providers should be encouraged to engage residents on plans for individual estates and areas.
- **Committing long-term funding to the Safer Street Fund** beyond March 2025, to allow for longer-term planning and programmes where relevant.
- **Supporting local level decision-making** by offering support to local government and housing providers to help with initiatives that address personal safety. This may be things such as supporting 20mph speed limit reductions where roads are particularly busy, or establishing new funding streams to enable local organisations to support neighbourhood efforts.

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/antisocial-behaviour-guidance-for-professionals#:~:text=The%20Anti%20social%20Behaviour%2C%20Crime,effective%20use%20of%20these%20powers.>

¹³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/perceptionsofpersonalsafetyandexperiencesofharassmentgreatbritain/16februaryto13march2022>

¹⁴ <https://mosssidestory.uk/community-projects/upping-it/upping-it-about/>

¹⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf

PRIORITY AREA: BETTER WASTE MANAGEMENT

What residents told us:

Poor waste management makes neighbourhoods look and smell unpleasant.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Ensuring homes in new developments meet building regulation requirements for refuse storage**, including best practice guidance outlined in the NHBC Foundation Report.¹⁶
- **Incorporating elements of new building regulations** surrounding litter storage and disposal in existing homes where this is feasible.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Communicating the role that housing providers are playing in addressing litter and fly-tipping.** Residents often feel there is a 'social contract' to maintaining an area and may be more willing to play a role in keeping the area clean if they feel housing providers are also doing their bit.

National government could help address this by:

- **Offering clear guidance and best practice** examples on the handling of domestic waste alongside the updated Decent Homes Standard.
- **Encouraging the trialling and adoption of more innovative approaches and solutions to handling domestic waste.** For example, the system in the Netherlands of having larger bins with underground chambers for waste disposal. These enable residents to dispose of waste in a piecemeal fashion as opposed to in smaller bins collected weekly or bi-weekly.
- **Offering additional support for local authorities** that require more intensive litter collection and waste management programmes, for example those in densely populated urban areas.



¹⁶ <https://www.designforhomes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NF60-Avoiding-rubbish-design.pdf>

5.4 Addressing priority areas: Sense of community and decision-making

Residents want communities that are connected and feel inclusive, with opportunities and spaces for people from all different walks of life to come together. They would like to see more free and affordable things to do for locals to help facilitate this, and are particularly eager to see support for older and younger generations. Ultimately, residents feel this will lead to happier and healthier communities where people can enjoy themselves and learn from one another.

There is the desire for communities to have a bigger role in decisions that impact them. Some suggest there could be some form of community leadership, although residents are typically unsure about what form this may take, how it would be achieved and how this would 'filter up' the decision-making chain.

This area is consistently a very high priority across all locations.

Recommendations for addressing this priority outcome:

PRIORITY AREA: TACKLING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

What residents told us:

There is strong concern about issues of loneliness and isolation, particularly (but not exclusively) for older people.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Understanding local initiatives that aim to tackle loneliness**, and signposting residents to these.
 - Examples of these initiatives may be online or physical loneliness cafes, or local Facebook groups that facilitate connection to others. Blackpool Coastal Housing offers social activities and befriending services which also includes support to residents to set up their own groups at local community centres¹⁷.
 - MSV Housing Group have also offered the MSV Bee Friendly Family scheme¹⁸ and currently organise a MSV Pen Pals initiative¹⁹, that directly aim to tackle loneliness and facilitate connection, which could be replicated elsewhere.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Being as present as possible in neighbourhoods to identify people who might be struggling**, and seeking to find ways in which to identify those who are currently falling through the gaps and how to help tackle their loneliness.
- **Seeking to work with national charities on existing or pilot projects** that address loneliness or may drive resident engagement and uptake of existing schemes.
- **Connecting housing providers with Public Health teams** to find ways to further tackle loneliness collaboratively.
- **Housing providers getting involved in national initiatives**, such as The Big Lunch²⁰.

National government could help address this by:

- **Involving housing providers in the Tackling Loneliness Network²¹**, seeking their input and location specific knowledge.
- **Ensuring the Loneliness Minister plays an active role in working with the housing sector**, working across government departments, providing education on loneliness and the impacts it can have.

¹⁷ <https://www.bch.co.uk/community-and-support-services/community-activities-and-befriending-service>

¹⁸ <https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/news-and-views/msv-news/lets-be-friends/>

¹⁹ <https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/news-and-views/msv-news/pen-pal-scheme-for-tenants/>

²⁰ <https://www.edenproject.com/mission/our-projects/the-big-lunch>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-plan-to-tackle-loneliness-during-coronavirus-lockdown>

PRIORITY AREA: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

What residents told us:

There is not enough to entertain and engage young people (especially teenagers), which many fear could result in them turning to anti-social behaviour and crime.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Creating activities and things to do in community spaces**, ensuring all age groups are catered for and involved in their creation.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Creating a route to include young people in all initiatives and projects**, not only those specifically for young people. This work could help to give young people a greater stake in the community they are part of. For example, involving young people in improvements to or the creation of green and community spaces.
- **Creating spaces to support young people, particularly in relation to employment and training.**
 - An example of this is Livv's Nobody Left Behind, a seven-week programme for young people that uses sport to engage those being left behind and equip them with practical trade skills. This programme included cold water therapy and boxing²².
 - Another example of this is MSV Housing Group's Positive Futures Employment and Training Space²³, where young people are able to get tailored help with securing training, skills development, apprenticeships, volunteering opportunities, work experience, and are offered support to find employment.
- **Supporting local cultural institutions or other relevant organisations**, to do more for young people, as well as being a route to connecting with them e.g. advertising specific initiatives within community spaces.
- **Seeking out partnerships with other organisations**, such as Sport England and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to see how they may be able to support new and existing initiatives in the area.

National government could help address this by:

- **Supporting new schemes to keep young people busy and engaged within their local community.** Looking to examples, such as Scotland's National Entitlement Card²⁴ and the Young Scot Card²⁵ that offers free public transport, rewards, and discounts at local retailers and venues, are felt to be key in ensuring that residents can afford to visit local attractions. Engaging with young people in England to ask their views.
- **Ensuring that different government departments, understand the role they can play in engaging young people at the local level** through partnerships with local organisations.

²² <https://livvhousinggroup.com/news/making-sure-nobody-is-left-behind/>

²³ <https://www.msvhousing.co.uk/positive-futures-employment-support-and-training/positive-futures/>

PRIORITY AREA: IMPROVING RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

What residents told us:

Most feel disempowered to be involved in decision-making for their local community, and do not trust those in decision-making roles.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Sharing and adopting best practices to ‘taking tenants views into account’ in their decision-making about how landlord services are delivered.** This can be achieved by taking actions such as using data from the tenant survey measures (TSMs) to inform service improvements or setting up neighbourhood groups where people can share ideas and plan initiatives alongside representatives from RPs and local authorities.
- **Investing and preparing for the new RSH consumer standards which outline the requirement to give tenants “a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord’s strategies, policies and services”,** engaging with colleagues in the sector and seeing the new standard as the basic level to achieve – going further wherever possible.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Connecting tenants with other service providers.** This could be achieved by supporting resident associations to bring together housing providers, local authorities, emergency services and other local services to enable resident viewpoints to be shared with decision makers.

National government could help address this by:

- **Implementing policy that focuses on encouraging decision-making that is closer to residents.**
 - The Levelling Up White Paper outlines a variety of policy programmes that should be built on, or brought forward, that would support innovation in local democracy and community decision making. This includes a programme of devolution, and subsequent trailblazer announcements, whereby existing regeneration funding and pots may be simplified.
 - The Government should also look to bring forward initiatives announced in the Levelling Up White Paper on community involvement in neighbourhood governance, alongside complimentary guidance that would facilitate implementation at the local level. These include the ‘Strategy for Community Spaces and Relationships’, ‘Review of Neighbourhood Governance’, ‘New models for Community Partnerships’ and ‘Community Covenants’²⁶.
 - Whilst not needing to be restricted to certain areas, Towns Boards provide an opportunity to pilot such initiatives and should be encouraged to innovate in how they support areas to develop and implement their own vision for regeneration and levelling up. The Prime Minister’s Towns Taskforce will be equally well placed to share good practice and learning nationally.
- **Government should continue to support the Social Housing Quality Resident Panel, ensuring their valuable input informs Government policy on housing standards in the sector.**
 - The Panel themselves may in the future wish to consider resident involvement in decision-making, and its impact on trust between tenants and landlords, and how each can have a positive impact on driving housing quality.

5.5 Addressing priority areas: State of the local environment

Residents want their local areas to feel more pleasant to ‘linger’ in, and to facilitate informal socialising. They want to feel they are surrounded by beauty and green/natural spaces, with more

creativity and art injected into local areas and areas being kept tidy and well-maintained beyond basic levels of cleanliness. There is also a desire to see neighbourhoods reflect the culture and identity of the residents that live there.

Recommendations for addressing this priority outcome:

²⁴ <https://www.entitlementcard.org.uk/>

²⁵ <https://young.scot/the-young-scot-card/>

²⁶ <https://livvhousinggroup.com/news/making-sure-nobody-is-left-behind/>

PRIORITY AREA: ENSURING GREEN SPACES REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

What residents told us:

Green spaces are hugely valued, but not currently meeting their full potential.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Conducting localised research to understand how current green spaces are used** by residents, and where potential improvements could be made that residents would gain the most benefit from. This could open up opportunities for community use.
- **Providing clarity on land ownership** and what actions local people can already take on their own to improve green spaces in their local area.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- Acting on the recommendations of *Unlocking the power of green spaces in Northern Towns and Cities*, researched by Thinks Insight and Strategy on behalf of the National Trust and Nature North²⁷.
- **Seeking out partnership opportunities with relevant experts** to make better use of green spaces. Groups to consider include environmental groups, National Trust, Wildlife Trust, and academics who are doing work in the environmental and green spaces area.
- **Providing education and inspiration on the possibilities of green space** to local residents, highlighting biodiversity or the potential from growing your own food.
 - An example of this can be found in the Green Spaces Advisory Board's (GSAB) work on biodiversity²⁸ and how the housing sector can move beyond grounds maintenance to unlock the potential of green spaces. The GSAB's examples of best practice case studies features ideas such as organising local picnics, inspiring people to grow their vegetables, and encouraging 'nature connectedness' in young people to facilitate a positive impact on physical and mental health.

National government could help address this by:

- **Ensuring the new Decent Homes Standard²⁹ includes non-statutory guidance** on access to and the quality of green spaces and other neighbourhood communal areas.
 - Guidance should look to build on RSH Neighbourhood and Community Standards covering the maintenance of shared spaces, possibly incorporating learning from the Office for Place in creating areas that are 'popular, healthy, beautiful and sustainable'. Planning reform should also take account of similar provision for existing market-rate housing and new build developments.
 - To ensure local needs are met, providers should be encouraged to engage residents on plans for individual estates and areas.
- **Providing better access to funding to support initiatives which** complement the development of green sociable communities such as the Active Travel Fund³⁰, and encourage coproduction of scheme design with local communities to ensure areas benefit holistically. Ensuring funds are flexible to meet the different needs of different communities, devolving funding and decision making to a local level wherever possible.
- **Increasing funding to local government for parks and green spaces** – improving these are a priority for local people, and getting this right in communities across England would have benefits on other government budgets, such as health and policing. This could be done in the short term by increasing the Levelling Up Parks Fund³¹, or the Green Space Renewal Fund through devolved authorities, and ensuring current green space provision is taken into account when distributing the funding (rather than competitively).

²⁷ <https://thinksinsight.com/unlocking-the-power-of-green-spaces-in-northern-towns-and-cities/>

²⁸ <https://www.ground-control.co.uk/gsab/>

²⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-people-to-benefit-from-200-million-to-improve-walking-and-cycling-routes>

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-parks-fund-prospectus/levelling-up-parks-fund-prospectus>

PRIORITY AREA: TIDYING UP NEIGHBOURHOODS

What residents told us:

Graffiti and litter can make neighbourhoods look untidy and unpleasant.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Having clear processes in place** to respond quickly to reports of graffiti, litter and other similar issues.
- **Ensuring that neighbourhoods are well equipped** in terms of litter bins and refuse collection.
- **Providing places and spaces for young people to do graffiti legally** to provide a platform for young to express themselves and contribute to the character of the local area.
- **Setting up neighbourhood groups for litter collection and graffiti removal** including providing equipment and graffiti removal kits to community groups.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Implementing beautification efforts and projects to coincide with efforts to tidy up the area.**

This could be approached by ensuring that graffiti is developed as local art, using other local art forms (sculpture, paintings) or attaching a post clean-up beautification project to formerly neglected spaces where littering was common. These projects are felt to be a good opportunity to involve young people in both tidying up and beautifying their local area. Ideas for these projects are found in the next priority idea.

National government could help address this by:

- **Providing all children access to education programmes** which showcase the impact of litter on the environment, and how this contributes to climate change.



PRIORITY AREA: REFLECTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

What residents told us:

There is a desire to see neighbourhoods be more reflective of the heritage and culture of local communities.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could help address this by:

- **Seeking to really understand the distinctive neighbourhoods they represent, and the people who live in them.** There is a need to embrace not just the history and heritage of the area, but also the current and emerging cultures and people.
 - This may mean supporting empowered neighbourhood staff with getting to know local tenants in person, and working with them to identify key areas for change in ensuring the neighbourhood is more reflective of them and their community.
- **Ensuring that the culture and priorities of young people** are met and reflected is felt to be key to adequately reflecting local communities both now and in the future.

Housing associations, ALMOs and councils could go further to address this by:

- **Taking active steps to upgrade neighbourhoods** through acts such as:
 - Identifying local artists who could be commissioned to paint or decorate areas of the neighbourhood that may have formerly been neglected, or are particularly visible (such as a community hub).
 - Setting up local culture days with residents, that may involve sharing different cultural traditions, cuisines, or artistic practices. For example, Yorkshire Housing's toured visit to an Anglo-Saxon site in Amotherby³².
- **Ensuring that regeneration efforts and new buildings in the area are reflective** of past, present and potential future community aspirations, culture and heritage.
- Being proactive in supporting residents to nominate the buildings and spaces that really matter to them as Assets of Community Value, as part of proposals for the Long Term Plan for Towns.

National government could help address this by:

- **Advocating for a more tailored approach to new build developments and regeneration projects** that are reflective of past histories and present cultures and aspirations, for example through the Office for Place.
- **Helping to establish 'heritage sensitive design codes'** that drive regeneration and sustainable development in a way that doesn't alienate the existing community or lose part of what makes a place unique.
- **Delivering capacity funding for planning departments** to enable this 'heritage sensitive design'.
- The Government's Towns Taskforce should consider Federation of Small Business publications on how small shops and entrepreneurs can be supported to establish a sustainable presence on the high street³³.

³² <https://www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk/news/amotherby-anglo-saxon-blog/>

³³ <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/fsb-an-entrepreneurial-north.html>, <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/streets-ahead.html#:~:text=Independents%2C%20many%20of%20whom%20are,using%20online%20methods%20to%20engage>



Afterword

6. Afterword

The last few years have seen a burgeoning conversation between politicians, academics and policy makers on how we empower people to make the most of the place they call home. The Levelling Up White Paper signalled the Government's intention to "restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging" across the country; but I think this conversation – about how we meet the actual, rather than perceived, needs and ambitions of communities – is bigger than any one government's agenda.

Helping people to thrive, and in turn creating thriving areas, has always been a key focus for the housing associations, councils and ALMOs who form the membership of the Northern Housing Consortium. Whether it's providing quality and affordable homes, working in partnership to regenerate neighbourhoods and town centres, supporting personal economic resilience, and improving health and wellbeing, all our work has tenants at the centre of our thinking. With Pride in Place, the NHC and our members Blackpool Coastal Housing, Karbon Homes, Livv Housing Group, MSV Housing, Yorkshire Housing, and most importantly the residents involved in the project themselves, have provided us with a compelling evidence base that gets to the heart of what makes a great place to live.

The North of England comprises a diverse range of areas, and each neighbourhood will have its own opportunities and needs. But from coastal Blackpool, to Benwell, Moss Side and Prescott, and rural Skipton, our work with both social and private sector residents has highlighted a series of common themes and priorities. That access to the fundamentals such as decent affordable housing, healthcare, and career opportunities are essential to quality of life. That far from needing 'restoring', pride drives residents to want to see the best for their communities, and a role for them in owning improvements. And that this pride should be reflected back in the local environment. In tidy streets, green spaces that promote sociability, and a celebration of local character.

In working together to co-create solutions, residents have offered us much to reflect on. Current and prospective governments looking to rebuild the social fabric have been challenged to think about the user experience of a fragmented and under-resourced public service system, and how devolution can be a process that pushes decision making closer to the community level. Constituency MP's

and local politicians have been given a range of causes and initiatives to champion, from backing local clubs to tackling isolation. And NHC members have been reminded, as the Better Social Housing Review underlines, that they have a vital role to play in providing decent housing, working with tenants on the matters that affect them, and providing an important community presence that is often the gateway for other services. We won't always get it right – but this report provides important pointers to what getting it right looks like.

As with the Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury, the NHC is committed to bringing our members together to discuss what residents have told us and share good practice that enables members to act on these priorities. We'll also continue our work at the political level to ensure the role of NHC members in any attempt to address regional and local inequality is recognised and valued, and that northern housing providers have the policy and resources necessary to play our part in making places across the North befitting of the pride residents feel in them.

Tracy Harrison, Chief Executive, Northern Housing Consortium

November 2023





Appendix

7.1 Detailed sample breakdown

Below is a detailed breakdown of the resident sample across the 5 location specific workshops from Phase 1.

BLACKPOOL

Category		Number of participants
Age	18-24	1
	25-34	4
	35-54	1
	55+	3
Gender	Male	5
	Female	4
Tenancy type	Social housing	7
	Private housing	2
Ethnicity	White	8
	Ethnic minority	1
Total		9

BENWELL

Category		Number of participants
Age	18-24	2
	25-34	2
	35-54	3
	55+	1
Gender	Male	5
	Female	3
Tenancy type	Social housing	5
	Private housing	3
Ethnicity	White	6
	Ethnic minority	2
Total		8

SKIPTON

Category		Number of participants
Age	18-24	0
	25-34	1
	35-54	1
	55+	6
Gender	Male	5
	Female	2
Tenancy type	Social housing	7
	Private housing	1
Ethnicity	White	8
	Ethnic minority	0
Total		8

MOSS SIDE

Category		Number of participants
Age	18-24	0
	25-34	0
	35-54	6
	55+	4
Gender	Male	2
	Female	8
Tenancy type	Social housing	9
	Private housing	1
Ethnicity	White	4
	Ethnic minority	6
Total		10

PRESCOT

Category		Number of participants
Age	18-24	0
	25-34	4
	35-54	1
	55+	3
Gender	Male	3
	Female	5
Tenancy type	Social housing	6
	Private housing	2
Ethnicity	White	8
	Ethnic minority	0
Total		8



Below is a detailed breakdown of the resident sample of the co-creation workshop for phase 2.

Co-creation workshop:

RESIDENTS

Category		Number of participants
Location	Blackpool	2
	Benwell	1
	Skipton	2
	Moss Side	3
	Prescot	2
Age	18-24	0
	25-34	5
	35-54	2
	55+	3
Gender	Male	5
	Female	5
Tenancy type	Social housing	8
	Private housing	2
Ethnicity	White	7
	Ethnic minority	3
Total		10





STAKEHOLDERS

Name	Role	Organisation
Ed Whiting	Director – Levelling Up	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Peter Fenn	Net Zero and Housing Quality	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Josh Neary-Pegler	Research and Policy Lead	Housing Diversity Network
Andrew Wilson	Co-Director	Same Skies
Stephen Dunstan	Director of Resources	Blackpool Coastal Homes
Mary Ormston	Community Engagement Team Leader	Karbon Homes
Tom Wilde	Director of Community and Business Planning	Livv Housing Group
Ruth Shedwick	Resident Engagement	MSV Housing Group
Joseph Suggitt	Customer Insight and Engagement Advisor	Yorkshire Housing
Brian Robson	Executive Director of Policy and Public Affairs	Northern Housing Consortium
Joanne Wilson	Head of Policy and Public Affairs	Northern Housing Consortium
Liam Gregson	Member Engagement Manager	Northern Housing Consortium
Tom Kennedy	Policy and Public Affairs Manager	Northern Housing Consortium
Tracy Harrison	Chief Executive Officer	Northern Housing Consortium



Partners:

