

# **Levelling Up Missions: The Role of the Devolved Legislatures and Devolved Administrations in Connection with the Missions**

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## Introduction

On 25th January the Government published its first Statement of Levelling Up Missions. As required by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, the Government has had regard to the devolved administrations<sup>1</sup> and legislatures in relation to the missions in the statement; this document sets out how the Government has done so.

In the Levelling Up White Paper<sup>2</sup>, published in February 2022, the Government set out how delivery of levelling up should be a collective effort across the UK:

*“Levelling up can only succeed as a shared national project. The six capitals – physical, human, intangible, financial, social and institutional – straddle areas of responsibility and tiers of government across the UK. The capitals are interdependent and success will only be achieved if each of them is thriving in a given place. For example, the UK Government can use its collective economic might to attract investment and job creation, but education outcomes, delivered by devolved administrations, are crucial to developing a workforce able to take advantage of these opportunities.*

*Devolution settlements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland recognise that devolved governments are best placed to deliver certain services, like health and education. But outcomes are a shared interest for the whole of the UK. Our broad UK-wide tax base already funds public services across the UK, ensuring for example that the NHS can deliver for people whether in Scotland, Wales, England or Northern Ireland. In practice, this means all layers of government need to come together with a common purpose. The UK Government is committed to facilitating collaboration and engagement with the devolved governments and stakeholders in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.”*

The approach we have taken to setting missions and metrics therefore reflects that achieving them must be a shared endeavour, and we are committed to working in collaboration with the devolved administrations to do this.

The UK Government and devolved administrations already work together on a range of policy endeavours in relation to the broad objective of levelling up, for example on delivery of freeports and investment zones. The UK Government also committed £80 million to expand the Levelling Up Partnerships programme to Scotland, in Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Argyll and Bute, Dundee, and the Scottish Borders, and worked in collaboration with the Scottish Government on the methodology to select places.

In addition, the UK Government has delivered funding into communities throughout the UK through levelling up initiatives such as the Community Ownership Fund (COF), UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Levelling Up Fund, working closely with local authorities and local partners. The COF, for example, has awarded £71.4 million to 257 projects across the UK to date. This includes £13.6 million allocated to 43 projects in Scotland, £4.2 million to 19 projects in Wales, and £5.5 million to 24 projects in Northern Ireland. In 2022, UKSPF allocations were announced for local places across Wales (£585 million) and Scotland (£212 million), and £127 million for Northern Ireland.

Across all rounds of the Levelling Up Fund, Scotland has received £471 million, Wales £440 million and Northern Ireland £150 million.

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<sup>1</sup> The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act refers to devolved authorities, for the remainder of this document we are referring to these as devolved administrations, a term more frequently used.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, [Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#), 2022

The devolved administrations have their own objectives and policy frameworks related to the goal of improving economic and social outcomes, including but not limited to:

- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation<sup>3</sup>;
- Wales's seven well-being goals set by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act<sup>4</sup>, and the Economic Mission: Priorities for a Strong Economy<sup>5</sup>; and
- Northern Ireland's 10 x Economy – An Economic Vision <sup>6</sup>.

The requirement of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act for the UK Government to set levelling up missions fully respects devolution and devolved responsibilities. Also, it does not create new reporting requirements for the devolved administrations: it is the UK Government's duty alone to report on progress against the levelling up missions. The choice of metrics against which progress will be measured by the UK Government is based on available data and, as far as possible, reflects the different responsibilities at different tiers of government.

In this document, we have considered and responded to the consultation undertaken with the devolved administrations on the draft Statement of Missions, we have provided further information of ongoing collaboration, in particular on relevant data across the UK, and we show, on a mission-by-mission basis, how we have had regard to the role of the devolved administrations in connection with the levelling up missions set out in the Statement of Missions.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act refers to the roles of the devolved administrations and devolved legislatures and the UK Government has been engaging with devolved administrations on the levelling up missions. Where this document refers to aspects of the missions which relate to devolved policy areas, we recognise, and have had regard to, the competence of the devolved legislatures to pass law in relation to those matters. It will be for devolved administrations to engage with their respective legislatures.

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<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government, [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#), 2022

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#), 2015

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, [Economic mission: priorities for a stronger economy](#), 2023

<sup>6</sup> NI Department [for the Economy, 10 x Economy – an economic vision](#), 2021

# Consultation with the devolved administrations

## Overview and changes to the Statement of Missions

As part of the process of developing the Statement of Levelling Up Missions, the UK Government consulted the devolved administrations on a draft of the Statement of Missions. Representations were received from the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Civil Service<sup>7</sup>, and the Statement of Missions was amended as appropriate, including by:

- Clarifying, for avoidance of doubt, the geographical scope of specific metrics which the UK Government will use to monitor progress against the missions (UK-wide, England-only etc.);
- Ensuring that terms used within the document are either common to the UK Government and devolved administrations, or explaining where a term may have different definitions. This included clarifying certain terminology between England and the devolved administrations. For example, ‘local government area’ in Northern Ireland instead of ‘lower tier local authority’ in England. We also outlined that the term ‘well-being’ may be used in different ways – for example, as a specific policy objective related to individuals’ and communities’ feelings of happiness and cohesion (broadly the sense applied within the levelling up well-being mission), or as a broader framework for aligning a policy programme (as used, for example, by the Scottish Government in its National Performance Framework).

## Geographical scope of levelling up missions and metrics

During the passage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and via the consultation process on the draft Statement of Missions, the Scottish and Welsh Governments set out concerns that a number of the levelling up missions overlap with devolved areas of responsibility. The Scottish Government has requested that the Statement of Missions be amended so that “missions in relation to transport, education, skills, health, wellbeing, pride in place, housing and crime do not apply in Scotland as these matters are the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament under the devolution settlement”.

The UK Government fully respects devolution and devolved responsibilities. Devolution offers people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the best of both worlds, and we are focused on making it work in the best way possible. It is the UK Government’s priority to deliver effective investment and level up every part of the UK, maximising benefits for citizens, businesses, and communities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Levelling up missions reflect that commitment to all parts of the UK and therefore cannot be amended to exclude Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, levelling up can only succeed as a shared national project. The six capitals – physical, human, intangible, financial, social, and institutional – straddle areas of responsibility and different levels of government across the UK. The capitals are interdependent, and success will only be achieved if each of them is thriving in a given place. For example, the UK Government can use its collective economic might to attract investment and for job creation, but educational outcomes, delivered by devolved administrations, are crucial to developing a workforce able to take advantage of these opportunities. Similarly, the levelling up missions are cross-cutting in nature and many of them will rely on a blend of devolved and reserved competences to be achieved. For example, in relation to the mission on healthy life expectancy, while health is predominantly devolved, some of the matters underpinning healthy life expectancy are reserved. For these reasons we have retained the pan-UK ambition of missions as set out within the Statement of Missions.

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<sup>7</sup> During the consultation of the Bill and receiving of the Royal Assent, the NI Executive was not sitting.

The missions do not impose any reporting requirement for devolved administrations. Rather, they reflect our intention to work with all levels of government across the UK in using our respective levers to deliver the best possible outcomes for people and communities.

#### Collaboration across the UK on data and metrics

The Northern Ireland Civil Service, in its consultation response, requested that clarity be provided around the geographical scope of the metrics used to measure progress. The Statement of Levelling Up Missions sets out which metrics the UK Government will use to monitor progress against each of the missions. This includes indicating the geographical scope of the specific metrics (UK-wide, England-only etc.). The next section sets out how the UK Government is working with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the devolved administrations to improve the coherence and comparability of data across the UK. It remains the UK Government's duty alone to report against the metrics; the UK-wide intent of levelling up does not create additional reporting duties on any of the devolved administrations.



# Working together and data collaboration

## Structures for engagement between the UK Government and devolved administrations

The review of intergovernmental relations (IGR) in 2022 committed the UK Government and devolved administrations to a renewed structure of intergovernmental working with a focus on positive collaboration, trust, and accountability. Since the review publication in January 2022, the UK Government and the devolved administration counterparts have worked together to implement the Review and set up structures, including 16 Interministerial Groups<sup>8</sup>. These structures provide a mechanism to engage with devolved administrations to share best practice and lessons learned, including on levelling up missions.

Across the UK, the UK Government works in collaboration with the devolved administrations in a number of areas which are set out in our transparency reports<sup>9</sup>.

For example, the City Region and Growth Deal programme<sup>10</sup> in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is supported by more than £2.9 billion from the UK Government. These are being jointly delivered and funded with the devolved administrations and local authorities, and they have been exemplars of collaboration between all tiers of government - UK Government, devolved administrations, and local government.

Freeports and Investment Zones are also being delivered in Scotland and Wales in support of our broad objective of Levelling Up. For example, in Wales we are investing £52 million for the creation of two new Freeports – the Celtic Freeport in South West Wales encompassing the ports of Port Talbot and Milford Haven, and the Anglesey Freeport centred on the Port of Holyhead. In Scotland, £52 million will support the creation of two new Green Freeports – at Opportunity Cromarty Firth and Forth Green Freeport. The ‘Safeguarding the Union’ paper<sup>11</sup> sets out to establish a generous, Enhanced Investment Zone offer in Northern Ireland, backed with £150 million in funding to give Northern Ireland the tools it needs to boost growth and attract investment.

## Data collaboration

Devolution offers important opportunities to learn about what works in different contexts. This can only be realised if there is coherent and comparable data across the UK. The Statistics Concordat between the UK Government and devolved administrations was refreshed in 2021<sup>12</sup>. It sets out how we will work together to deliver an agreed suite of coherent, reliable, consistent, and timely statistics, bringing together datasets in a number of priority areas, and enabling new UK-wide insights not previously possible. There are several cross-government projects ongoing under the Coherence of Statistics<sup>13</sup> programme of work to improve coherence of statistics across the UK.

Some of the projects which have been identified and/or are completed relate to levelling up missions. This includes dedicated work to fill data gaps across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as wider work to improve data consistency and coherence across the UK. Examples include:

- Living standards: UK-wide datasets and analysis on productivity (as measured by Gross Value Added – GVA – per hour) have been produced for England and the devolved administrations at local authority and ITL3 level. Most recently, the datasets have been expanded to include Northern Ireland GVA per hour statistics at local authority level, to produce UK-wide data

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<sup>8</sup> These were attended by NI officials in the absence of Ministers and no position was taken.

<sup>9</sup> UK Government, [Intergovernmental Relations](#)

<sup>10</sup> The City Region and Growth Deal programme pre-dates the Levelling Up White Paper.

<sup>11</sup> UK Government, [Safeguarding the Union](#), 2024

<sup>12</sup> UK Statistics Authority, [Concordat on Statistics](#)

<sup>13</sup> Government Analysis Function, [Coherence of statistics](#)

where previously only GB-level statistics were available. Furthermore, the flexible geography project has published GVA “building blocks”<sup>14</sup> where UK-level GVA figures have been disaggregated to the smallest geographic areas possible to allow users to create any area of interest across the UK.

- Housing: a UK-wide Local Authority level dataset<sup>15</sup> has been produced for newly built dwellings by using a mutually agreed methodology across the devolved administrations. Previously users would have to find local authority data from across multiple data sources and websites. This unified publication allows for UK-wide comparison of new housing stock each year. We also published an article on how fuel poverty is measured in the UK.<sup>16</sup> This provides a better understanding of the similarities and differences in how fuel poverty is measured across the UK, the different metrics and methodologies used, and limitations for producing a UK-wide statistic. UK-wide datasets are now also available for housing purchase affordability<sup>17</sup> (measuring the ratio of average household income to average house price) where data and analysis have been expanded to include Northern Ireland. Previously this data was available at GB-level only.
- Health: The ONS, with statisticians in devolved administrations, is also driving forward a specific programme of work focussed on UK-wide health coherence. The coherence team within the ONS has engaged across the statistical system, agreeing an approach to build understanding of the different data and progress outputs for six health measures. The ONS published a blog<sup>18</sup> communicating their plans to create a coherent picture of health in the UK, including plans to publish these six health metrics. The ONS, with statisticians in devolved governments, has published the first of these, a summary of ambulance response times data in the UK,<sup>19</sup> in September, with more to follow (A&E Waiting Times and NHS Workforce). All six are aimed to be published within 2023-24 or shortly thereafter. The ONS and statisticians in devolved administrations have also produced new UK-wide comparable data on adult smoking prevalence across the UK at local authority level, by age and sex. Previously these statistics were available for GB only. The ONS is continuing to engage with health leaders, including the UK Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Medical Officers for the devolved administrations, to help prioritise needs for future UK-wide data coherence initiatives.

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<sup>14</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Disaggregating UK annual subnational gross value added \(GVA\) to lower levels of geography](#)

<sup>15</sup> Office for National Statistics, [House building data, UK](#)

<sup>16</sup> Office for National Statistics, [How fuel poverty is measured in the UK](#)

<sup>17</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Housing Purchase Affordability, UK](#)

<sup>18</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Creating a coherent picture of health in the UK](#), 2023

<sup>19</sup> Government Analysis Function, [Summary of ambulance response time data in the UK](#)

# The levelling up missions and the role of the devolved administrations

This section sets out more detail on the importance of levelling up across the UK for each of the missions (excluding the England-only local leadership mission). It also considers the role of the devolved administrations in relation to each mission and the metrics against which the UK Government will report progress.

It illustrates that the levelling up missions are cross-cutting in nature and many of them will rely on a blend of devolved and reserved competences to be achieved.

It remains the UK Government's duty alone to report against the metrics, and the UK-wide intent of levelling up does not create additional reporting duties on any of the devolved administrations.

## Mission 1: Living Standards

**By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.**

What is the picture across the UK?

The metrics used to monitor living standards show disparities across the UK:

- London had the highest productivity level of any UK region<sup>20</sup> in 2021, with GVA per hour worked more than 30% higher than the UK average. Scotland was 4.7%, Northern Ireland 10.6% and Wales 15.9% lower than the UK average. The lowest performing UK region was the North East, with GVA per hour worked 17.4% lower than the UK average.<sup>21</sup>
- For the three months ending July 2023, the highest employment rate (aged 16-64) estimate in the UK was for the South East (79.6%) and the lowest was for Northern Ireland (71.1%). In Scotland and Wales, the employment rate was 75.1% and 74% respectively. Scotland and Wales observed higher employment rates than the English regions of London (73.5%) and the North West (73.6%).<sup>22</sup>
- In 2022, Scotland (£528.30), Wales (£497.90) and Northern Ireland (£497.80) had median weekly gross pay below the UK median (£532.50) but above the English regions of Yorkshire and The Humber (£481.50), North East (£484.10), and East Midlands (£496.40).<sup>23</sup>

The levelling up living standards mission aims to address these disparities by increasing the performance of all areas of the UK in terms of pay, employment and productivity, and narrowing the gaps on these metrics across regions. By targeting the creation of a globally competitive city in each area, the mission aims to improve the productivity of regional economies across the country.

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<sup>20</sup> Throughout this document the word 'regions' and language used to reference specific regions is consistent with the [International Territorial Level 1 \(ITL1\) classification](#); in the UK the ITL1 classification is Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the English regions: North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East (of England), London, South East, South West.

<sup>21</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Regional labour productivity, UK](#), 2021

<sup>22</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Labour market in the regions of the UK](#), September 2023

<sup>23</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Earnings and hours worked, UK region by age group](#), 2022

### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The scope of this mission is to increase pay, productivity, and jobs in every part of the UK by 2030, and for there to be a globally competitive city in every region of the UK. This is a broad and overarching mission which depends upon various reserved<sup>24</sup> and devolved levers. Achieving this mission will require a holistic approach and will depend in part on progress made against the other missions. The mission's target for a globally competitive city in each area recognises the importance of strong cities in driving the economies of their regions, supporting neighbouring towns and areas, and contributing to national growth and productivity. The UK Government aims to work together with devolved administrations towards achieving the aim of the mission through place-based programmes such as Investment Zones and Freeports which will help to deliver increased investment and unlock growth and productivity.

### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The headline metrics for the living standards mission are GVA per hour, gross median weekly pay, and employment rates (16-64), measured over ITL1 regions. These metrics are publicly available, reported UK-wide, and routinely updated by the ONS.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the living standards mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions' report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 2: Research & Development**

**By 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40%, and over the Spending Review period by at least one third. This additional government funding will seek to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.**

### What is the picture across the UK?

The metrics used to monitor R&D expenditure show disparities across the UK:

- Experimental estimates of UK public-funded gross regional capital and non-capital expenditure on research and development for the financial year ending 2021 show that per-capita spend is highest in London (£311) and the South East (£289). Scotland (£234) shows the next highest level of expenditure, above all other regions of England, but the lowest levels are in Wales (£116) and Northern Ireland (£114).<sup>25</sup>
- Similarly, in 2021, Business Expenditure on Research & Development (BERD) per capita was higher in England (£739), driven by East of England, London and the South East, compared to Scotland (£570), Wales (£372) and Northern Ireland (£462).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In Northern Ireland matters which have not been devolved may be either 'reserved' or 'excepted', where reserved matters may only be legislated on with consent of the Secretary of State. In this document where we use 'reserved' we refer to matters which are not devolved, i.e., these could be reserved or excepted in Northern Ireland.

<sup>25</sup> Office for National Statistics, [UK public-funded gross regional capital and non-capital expenditure on research and development, 2021](#) and [NOMIS population estimates mid-year 2021](#).

<sup>26</sup> Office for National Statistics, [UK gross domestic expenditure on research and development, 2021](#), and [NOMIS population estimates mid-year 2021](#).

The levelling up R&D mission aims to address this situation by increasing public R&D investment outside of the Greater South East (London, East and South East) by at least 40% by 2030, and by a third over the Spending Review period, whilst also leveraging additional private R&D investment.

#### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The scope of the mission is R&D expenditure by UK Government departments and business R&D expenditure (BERD) across the UK. For example, UK Research Innovation (UKRI) is the national funding agency for research and innovation, sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). Eight of UKRI's nine councils fund activity across the UK, including significant investments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland through programmes such as the Strength in Places Fund and Innovate UK Launchpads. The ninth council, Research England, supports Higher Education Providers in England to carry out research and knowledge exchange activities.

R&D expenditure by devolved administrations and their agencies is not in scope of the mission. Devolved administrations can supplement UK Government R&D funding and activity according to their own priorities. Higher education funding, including core funding for university research, is a devolved responsibility, carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.

The UK Government engages regularly with devolved administrations on R&D strategic priorities, including through biannual meetings between the Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation, and respective Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There is also regular engagement on specific R&D programmes and activities. For example, DSIT has worked with the Scottish Government to develop the Glasgow City Region Innovation Accelerator.

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The headline metrics for this mission are UK Government domestic R&D spending and BERD by region, measured on an annual basis. UK Government departments are working with the ONS to collect and publish data breakdowns of their domestic R&D spending by ITL1 region. This will be used to calculate UK Government domestic R&D spending outside the Greater South East, which comprises the ITL1 regions of London, the South East and East of England.

Experimental data on the regional breakdown of UK net public expenditure on R&D for financial year 2020-21 was published by the ONS in April 2023. This includes a breakdown of UK Government R&D expenditure in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It does not include R&D expenditure by devolved administrations and their agencies, as this is not in scope of the mission.

The headline metric of BERD is publicly available, reported UK-wide and routinely updated by the ONS.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the R&D mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 3: Transport**

**By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.**

#### What is the picture across the UK?

The Levelling Up White Paper observed disparities in public transport usage across the UK:

- In 2021, the proportion of residents using public transport (bus, coach, or rail) as their main method of travel to work in Scotland (12.5%), and Wales (5.9%) was lower than in England (16.0%), and this gap has not improved when compared to 2010. However, much of this difference may be attributed to the effect of high public transport usage in London (53.8%); indeed the UK regions with the lowest proportions of residents using public transport as their main method of travel to work were the South West (5.5%), East of England (5.7%), and the East Midlands (5.8%).<sup>27</sup>The regional picture may be driven by the proportion of the population living in rural and urban areas. We can use 2021 Census data in England and Wales, the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland, and the 2022 Census in Scotland for local authorities, council areas and local government districts to find the areas with the highest proportion of usual residents, aged 16 and over and in employment, using public transport (bus, coach, or rail) as their main method of travel to work. Looking across UK ITL1 regions (and excluding London) shows that Scotland contains the highest performing area (Glasgow City, 23%),<sup>28</sup> followed by East Midlands (Nottingham, 14.5%) and the North West (Manchester, 13.9%). Wales has the area with the relatively lowest proportion (Cardiff, 6%), whilst Northern Ireland (Belfast, 8.9%)<sup>29</sup> performs better than the South West (Bristol, City of, 6.8%).<sup>30</sup>
- Whilst not directly comparable due to differing surveys, between 2017-2019 in Northern Ireland the proportion of average journeys per person made by bus or rail was 4.4%.<sup>31</sup> In 2018 to 2019, the proportion of average journeys per person made by bus or rail in England was 8.7%. Within England there is further disparity, with the equivalent figure for London being 27%, compared with 5.5% for England outside London.<sup>32</sup>

The levelling up transport mission aims to address this situation by bringing up the level of local public transport connectivity across the country closer to London’s standards (using appropriate local benchmarks in rural and urban areas across the UK), including through simpler fares and integrated ticketing.

#### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The scope of this mission is for local transport connectivity to be closer to London’s standards. Transport plays a crucial role for levelling up, with transport infrastructure being an important form of physical capital because it reduces journey times between places, increases connectivity and provides people, firms, and workers with increased market access.

Transport is largely devolved, although some areas (such as maritime and aviation policy, and most aspects of rail infrastructure in Wales) are reserved to the UK Government. Consequently, most policy areas relevant to the transport mission (including local transport) are devolved. There is an opportunity for the UK Government and devolved administrations to share learning and best practice across the UK. In December 2023, the Government published its response to Lord Hendy’s independent review into transport connectivity across the UK (“the Union Connectivity Review”). The Union Connectivity Review and the Government’s response to it took a strategic approach to transport recognising that people’s daily journeys – for work, business, leisure, education, and health reasons – as well as the daily movement of goods regularly cross administrative boundaries. As such, Government should take a strategic approach to ensuring those journeys work for both people and businesses and to strengthen vital transport connections across our country. Many of the Union Connectivity Review’s recommendations related to issues where responsibility for transport is devolved. Where this was the

<sup>27</sup> Department for Transport, [Usual method of travel to work by region of workplace](#), 2023

<sup>28</sup> Statistics.Gov.Scot, [Statistics on what mode of transport \(walking, cycling, car, bus, train\) people usually use to get to work and education, purposes of journeys made by Scottish people](#), 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, [Census 2021 main statistics travel to work or study tables](#), 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Office for National Statistics, [TS061 - Method used to travel to work](#), 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Department for Infrastructure – Table 3.6, [Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2020-2021](#)

<sup>32</sup> Department for Transport, National Travel Survey, Table [NTS0303](#) and [NTS9903](#), 2023

case, we have worked, and will continue to work, collaboratively with the devolved administrations. This has resulted, for example, in the UK Government committing funding to deliver targeted improvements to the A75 between Gretna and Stranraer as part of the Network North announcement, starting with providing £8 million to the Scottish Government to support their business case development.

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The first headline metric is 'Public transport trips as a proportion of total trips per year'. It derives from the National Travel Survey for England and is available for ITL1 regions. Similar surveys exist in Northern Ireland and Scotland (via the Scottish Household Survey<sup>33</sup>) although they are not directly comparable. Wales is currently establishing its own travel survey.

The second headline metric, 'Public Transport Connectivity', is a new measure of connectivity to monitor the mission. Public transport connectivity measures how easy it is for people to get to where they need to go using buses, trains, and other forms of public transport. It takes account of different types of destination (offices, schools etc.) and how long it takes to reach them based on public transport timetable information. It will cover England and Wales. The metric will be made publicly available and routinely updated by the Department for Transport. It is produced for lower super output areas and output areas geographies in England and Wales. The headline metric does not cover Northern Ireland or Scotland, which produce their own suite of transport statistics.

The metrics reflect measurement of tangible differences in the physical transport infrastructure, that the devolved administrations can influence through their roles. In some cases, change will also be driven by population behaviour in response to wider policies, or indeed more localised changes in individual areas (e.g., increases or decreases in the provision of health care, workplace or leisure locations changing the types of journeys the population needs to make).

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the transport mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 4: Digital Connectivity**

**By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.**

#### What is the picture across the UK?

Metrics monitoring digital connectivity show disparities in coverage across the UK:

- As of May 2023, UK coverage of gigabit capable services is 75%, with England (76%) and Northern Ireland (91%) having better coverage than average. On the other hand, Scotland (69%) and Wales (60%) have coverage worse than average<sup>34</sup>.
- As of April 2023, UK geographic 4G coverage by at least one provider is 93%, with England (98%) having near complete coverage. Northern Ireland (97%) is not far behind, with Wales (91%) and Scotland (84%) having the lowest coverage<sup>35</sup>.
- As of April 2023, UK geographic 5G coverage by at least one provider is 34/26% (5G high confidence/5G very high confidence), with England (51/38%) having the most complete

<sup>33</sup> Transport Scotland, [Transport and Travel in Scotland 2021: Results from the Scottish Household Survey](#)

<sup>34</sup> Ofcom, [Connected Nations - Summer Update 2023](#)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

coverage. This is followed by Northern Ireland (28/23%), with Wales (24/18%) and Scotland (11/8%) having the lowest coverage<sup>36</sup>.

The levelling up digital mission aims to address this situation by increasing gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage across the whole UK, and 5G coverage for the majority of the population. This will ensure access to high-speed broadband for all populated areas by 2030.

#### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The scope of this mission is UK-wide, and the UK Government has reserved responsibility for gigabit-capable broadband, 4G and 5G. Delivery of gigabit capable broadband is led by Building Digital UK (BDUK) and DSIT, and 4G coverage is led by the Shared Rural Network (SRN), an industry initiative with UK Government support. The government announced a new ambition for nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas by 2030, as set out in the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy. We recognise that this new coverage ambition is stretching but we will work with industry to achieve it.

Devolved administrations have different responsibilities in the rollout of gigabit broadband. The Scottish Government, for example, is the contracting authority for local and regional Project Gigabit procurements in Scotland, as is the Department for Economy in Northern Ireland. In Wales, BDUK is the contracting authority. BDUK remains the contracting authority for cross-regional procurements across all parts of the UK. Regardless of their role in Project Gigabit, BDUK and DSIT maintain a close working relationship with the devolved administrations.

Alongside Project Gigabit, the devolved administrations also have their own programmes that provide gigabit capable infrastructure: the R100 programme in Scotland, Project Stratum in Northern Ireland, and Superfast Cymru in Wales.

The SRN will see the UK Government and industry jointly invest over £1 billion to increase 4G mobile coverage throughout the UK, to achieve 95% geographic coverage by the end of 2025. This is underpinned by legally binding spectrum obligations. Further coverage improvements in the more hard-to-reach areas will continue to be delivered until the start of 2027. The programme will lead to increases in coverage across all parts of the UK, with the biggest coverage improvements in rural parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Due to its challenging geography, Scotland currently has the lowest geographic coverage in the UK and for this reason around 75% of total UK Government SRN spend, of over £500 million, will be directed at improving coverage here. The Total Not Spots part of the SRN programme attracts funding of c.£301 million, all of which will be spent in Scotland, to provide coverage in areas where there is currently no coverage at all.

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

Headline metrics for the digital connectivity mission are publicly available, reported UK-wide and routinely updated by the Ofcom. The metrics for this mission will be tracked at lower tier local authority level in England, local authority level in Wales, council areas in Scotland and local government areas in Northern Ireland.

The first and second headline metrics are that the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband, and nationwide 4G coverage. These are sourced from the Connected Nations report, produced by Ofcom. For the gigabit-capable broadband metric, nationwide is defined as over 99% of UK premises, and for 4G it is defined as 95% of UK landmass. The third headline metric, '5G coverage for the majority of the population in the UK', is also sourced from the Connected Nations report. The metric expresses the percentage of UK premises with a 5G signal available outside from at least one operator.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



Data for all three metrics is available at Westminster constituency, local and unitary authority, nation, and UK level.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the digital mission to Parliament in Westminster via an annual levelling up missions report. This does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## Mission 5: Education

**By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.**

### What is the picture across the UK?

Disparities in educational outcomes exist across different areas in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- The 2022 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, which examines what students (aged 15) know in mathematics, reading and science, indicates that England records the highest average scores in maths and science, and joint highest with Scotland for reading. Wales has the lowest average scores for science and reading, and joint lowest with Scotland for maths.<sup>37</sup> However, England has a bigger gap than Wales between the 10% best and the 10% worst performing students for mathematics and science.<sup>38</sup>
- In 2022/23, London had the highest proportion of pupils (67%) meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) at Key Stage 2 in England, while in the South West of England this is 57%.<sup>39</sup> In Scotland, 90% of pupils in East Renfrewshire and 86% of pupils in East Dunbartonshire council areas reached the expected standard in numeracy at P7 in 2022/23, compared with 69% in Clackmannanshire.<sup>40</sup> In Wales, in 2022/23, Vale of Glamorgan had the highest Capped 9 points score (382) while Isle of Anglesey, Denbighshire and Blaenau Gwent had the lowest with corresponding scores of approximately 325, 339 and 340 respectively.<sup>41 42</sup> In Northern Ireland, 86% of students in Fermanagh and Omagh received 5 A\*-C GCSEs in 2020/21, including English and maths, compared with 72% in Belfast.<sup>43</sup>

The education mission seeks to address this by focusing on improving children's proficiency in literacy and numeracy, wherever they live and learn, and increasing the number of primary school children achieving expected standards in reading, writing and maths.

### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The scope of this mission is focused on improving children's proficiency in literacy and numeracy wherever they live and learn. Education is devolved and education policy is the responsibility of devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, the UK Government and

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<sup>37</sup> This statement accounts for confidence intervals associated with the OECD estimates.

<sup>38</sup> OECD – Annex B2, [PISA 2022 Results \(Volume I\) : The State of Learning and Equity in Education](#)

<sup>39</sup> Department for Education, [Key stage 2 attainment, Academic year 2022/23](#)

<sup>40</sup> Scottish Government, [Chapter 7: Achievement of CfE Levels by local authority - Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence \(CfE\) levels: 2022/23](#)

<sup>41</sup> A new curriculum for Wales began being rolled out in schools and settings in September 2022. As a result, Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 teacher assessment results are no longer collected. Also, 2018/19 is the most recent year available with reported Percent achieving 5 A\*-A GCSEs or equivalent, when more than 27% of year 11 students in Vale of Glamorgan were achieving 5A\*-A GCSEs, compared with less than 10% in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

<sup>42</sup> Welsh Government, StatsWales, [Key Stage 4 Interim Measures by LEA, from 2018/19](#)

<sup>43</sup> Northern Ireland Government, Department for Education, [School Leavers - 2020/21](#)

devolved administrations have mutual objectives to improve educational outcomes and reduce disparities and there is an opportunity to work together and share best practice.

Increasing the proportion of primary school pupils reaching the expected standard of reading, writing and maths in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will require close collaboration between the UK Government and the devolved administrations. For example, the UK Government is committed to working with the devolved administrations to explore how Oak National Academy can support students in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The headline metric for this mission is the proportion of students who reach the expected level in reading, writing and maths at key stage 2 (and equivalent) in England. These metrics are publicly available at local authority level and are updated annually by the Department for Education.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the education mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 6: Skills**

**By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.**

What is the picture across the UK?

Skills are central to economic growth. Across the whole UK we need skilled people to drive productivity in the economy and deliver growth in key sectors – green industries, digital technologies, life sciences, creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. There is a single integrated labour market across the UK with disparities between and within all parts of the UK. This means we need to focus on driving up skills levels in all parts of the UK so that employers can find the skills they need.

Metrics used to monitor skills outcomes show disparities across the UK:

- The Apprenticeships Start rate per 100 thousand population in England in 2022/23 is 939, down from 981 in 2021/22.<sup>44</sup>
- London, East of England and the South East have the lowest rates with 592, 856 and 892 starts per 100,000 population correspondingly, while the North East has the highest (1,114).<sup>44</sup>
- Whilst not directly comparable, the start rate for all apprenticeship programmes in Wales was 645 per 100,000 population in the academic year 2021/22<sup>45</sup>, the start rate for Modern Apprenticeships programmes in Scotland was 464 in financial year 2021/22<sup>46</sup>, the start rate for all apprenticeships in Northern Ireland was 399 per 100,000 population in the academic year 2021/22.<sup>47</sup>
- Overall, in 2021, Scotland has the highest share of those aged 16-64 with NVQ3+ qualifications (65%), followed by England (61%), Northern Ireland (59%) and Wales (58%). Within England,

<sup>44</sup> DfE, [Geography Region - Starts, Achievements, Participation, Population by Age, Level' from 'Apprenticeships and traineeships, 2023](#)

<sup>45</sup> StatsWales, [Apprenticeship learning programmes started by quarter, sector and programme type and NOMIS population estimates mid-year 2021](#).

<sup>46</sup> Skills Development Scotland, [MA Starts by Local Authority 2021-22 and NOMIS population estimates mid-year 2021](#).

<sup>47</sup> Department for the Economy, [Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland Fact Sheet 2021/22 and NOMIS population estimates mid-year 2021](#).

London and the South East correspondingly have 71% and 64%, and the North East has the lowest share with 55%.<sup>48</sup>

The levelling up skills mission aims to address this situation by increasing the number of people who have completed high-quality skills training across all parts of the UK.

#### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The scope of this mission is to raise skills in every area of the UK. Skills is devolved and devolved administrations hold responsibility for skills in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Both the UK Government and devolved administrations have a shared objective to increase skill levels in every part of the UK. The Department for Education engages the devolved administrations at ministerial and official level on a range of areas covering education, skills, and family policies. Collaborating and sharing best practice have positive spillover effects for all UK regions through internal migration, with increased human capital accumulation across the UK, delivering increased productivity and attracting more high-value-added businesses and FDI.

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The headline metric for the mission is the number of adults who are successfully completing high-quality skills training. The baseline calculations for this metric include qualification-focused 19+ Further Education and skills training achievement (including apprenticeships), but not Higher Education. This metric is reported for England only and is publicly available at the local authority level and routinely updated. This reflects devolved administrations' responsibility on skills and variation in the delivery systems and qualifications across the administrations.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the skills mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 7: Health**

**By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years.**

#### What is the picture across the UK?

Metrics used to monitor health outcomes show disparities across the UK:

- Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) is an estimate of the average number of years a person born today can expect to live in a state of “very good” or “good” health. Average HLE estimates for the UK across the period of 2018-2020 suggest 62.8 years of healthy life for men and 63.6 years for women. The South East of England had the highest HLE estimates of all ITL1 areas in the UK for both men (65.5 years) and women (65.9 years). This was closely followed by the South West (64.7 years for men and 65.5 years for women) and East of England (64.6 for men and 65.0 for women). The North East of England showed the lowest HLE estimates of all ITL1 areas in the UK for both men (59.1 years) and women (59.7 years), while Scotland's HLE estimates were 60.9 years for men and 61.8 for women. Wales and Northern Ireland's HLE estimates were both expecting 61.5 years of healthy life for men, and 62.4 and 62.7 respectively for women.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> NOMIS – Official Census and Labour Market Statistics, [Annual Population Survey/Labour Force Survey](#), 2021

<sup>49</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Health state life expectancy, all ages, UK](#)

The health mission seeks to address this by improving overall HLE and narrowing disparities in HLE across the UK.

#### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

Healthy Life Expectancy is an important metric to measure population health across the UK. Health is predominantly devolved, whilst policy on some matters that underpin health is reserved. The UK Government is committed to health improvement and reducing health disparities. DHSC officials engage regularly with their counterparts in the devolved administrations, for example through the UK Directors of Population Health Group, to discuss opportunities to take joined-up action wherever possible and share knowledge on what works, to maximise the benefits of interventions.

The UK Government and devolved administrations take collective action where this works to the benefit of citizens. For example, the devolved administrations have each shown their support for UK-wide action to tackle smoking and vaping, and the UK-wide consultation response – Creating a smoke-free generation and tackling youth vaping<sup>50</sup> – was published 29 January 2024. The ONS Health Inequalities Theme Group has also agreed to UK-wide representation going forward, which will enable us to share data and learnings to tackle health disparities.

Although many strategic decisions to improve health and reduce disparities are devolved, there is a good opportunity to work collaboratively to improve health outcomes UK-wide.

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) is a routinely updated, publicly available UK-wide measure, which combines mortality rates with self-reported health data from the Annual Population Survey and Censuses. This metric will be measured over upper tier local authorities in England, local authorities in Wales, council areas in Scotland and local government districts in Northern Ireland. The gap referenced in the mission will be measured across the UK as the difference between the median HLEs in the top and bottom deciles of local authorities, when ranked by HLE, and the baseline data will be taken from HLE 2017-19. ONS methodology ensures that data is comparable for all parts of the UK.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the health mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 8: Well-being**

**By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.**

#### What is the picture across the UK?

Measures of subjective well-being show disparities across the UK:

- In 2022-23, it is estimated that 6.9% of individuals aged 16 and over in Wales had poor life satisfaction, the highest share across all UK regions. East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber had the next highest shares respectively (6.5% and 6.4%), followed by Scotland (6.1%). Northern Ireland performed better than the UK average and better than most regions in England, with a share of 5.2%. The South East had the lowest share of individuals aged 16 and over with poor life satisfaction (5.1%).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Department of Health and Social Care, [Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping](#), 2023

<sup>51</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Personal well-being estimates by local authority](#), 2023.

The well-being mission aims to address this by improving well-being everywhere, focusing on people with the lowest well-being as a priority, and reducing the gap between the worst and best performing areas.

What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The well-being mission aims to improve well-being in every area of the UK and to reduce disparities between the best and worst performing areas. The drivers of well-being are wide-ranging, with some being devolved and some reserved. This offers an opportunity for the UK Government and devolved administrations to share best practice and learn from different approaches across the UK, for example in Scotland, the ‘National Strategy for Economic Transformation’<sup>3</sup> sets out the vision for a well-being economy, and in Wales the ‘Well-being of Future Generations Act’<sup>4</sup> sets out the ambition and legal obligation to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. The well-being mission reflects our intention to maximise this opportunity to share evidence and best practice.

How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The headline metrics for the well-being mission are publicly available, UK-wide, and routinely updated by the ONS. The metrics are available for lower tier local authorities in England, local authorities in Wales, council areas in Scotland and local government areas in Northern Ireland.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government’s responsibility alone to report on performance against the well-being mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 9: Pride in Place**

**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.**

What is the picture across the UK?

UK-wide data does not currently exist for the pride in place mission. Therefore, to paint a partial picture of pride in place across the UK, the Onward Social Fabric Index (Relationship thread) provides a suitable proxy for measuring part of the mission. Using this we observe disparities across the UK:

- The data shows that 14% of local authorities in Wales are in the bottom quintile (indicating weaker local relationship scores), with only 9% within the top quintile (indicating stronger local relationship scores). For Scotland, only 9% of council areas are in the bottom quintile, but 38% of council areas in the top quintile. Scotland has one of the highest proportions of council areas in the top quintile. For Northern Ireland, 9% of local government areas can be found in both the bottom and top quintiles. When looking at the proportion of areas in the bottom quintile, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland tend to perform better than most English regions, outperformed only by the South East and the South West<sup>52</sup>.

What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The pride in place mission aims to improve peoples’ local pride and area satisfaction in every part of the UK, and to reduce the gap between the best and worst performing areas. There is a mix of reserved and devolved policies that underpins this mission. The UK Government is working with a range of local partners across the UK to regenerate our town centres and high streets, support individuals into

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<sup>52</sup> Onward, [2023 Social Fabric Index, 2023](#)

employment, improve local transport links, and invest in local culture. This is whilst giving communities a stronger voice to take over cherished local assets that might otherwise be lost. This is supported through funds such as the Levelling Up Fund, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the Long Term Plan for Towns. These programmes are already having an impact in regenerating our local high streets, improving the public realm and transport connectivity, developing our cultural, heritage, and sports assets, and reducing anti-social behaviour.

Devolved administrations' own community and regeneration plans also support improvements in pride in place. In Scotland, the 'National Strategy for Economic Transformation'<sup>53</sup> sets out the need to build a well-being economy, with a strong focus on the community. In Northern Ireland, the 'Building Inclusive Communities Strategy'<sup>53</sup> sets out ambitions in Northern Ireland to tackle the complex and longstanding issues impacting the lives of people, communities, and places. In Wales, 'Economic Mission: Priorities for a Stronger Economy'<sup>5</sup> sets out its ambition to "develop vibrant, well-connected villages, towns and cities" and the Welsh Government's 'Transforming Towns' programme prioritises the value of placemaking.<sup>54</sup>

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

In the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper and Technical Annex, the UK Government identified challenges to developing measures of pride in place and shared plans to expand existing surveys and collect data to identify trends and disparities. The Community Life Survey is the first step to achieving this and has been expanded to include new questions related to pride in place and an increased sample size to obtain estimates at the local authority level for England. This will be available at the end of 2024. However, as the pride in place mission is UK-wide, the second step is to work with devolved administrations and local government representatives in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to identify opportunities to obtain UK-wide estimates.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the pride in place mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 10: Housing**

**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.**

#### What is the picture across the UK?

Making comparisons across parts of the UK is difficult: housing policy is devolved and data for the housing mission headline metrics is available for England only, drawing on data from the English Housing Survey. The devolved administrations publish separate housing data, but different standards mean that findings are often not directly comparable. The UK Government is committed to developing a public metric for first-time buyers, with an aspiration for UK-wide data.

Although directly comparable data is not available, measures of housing quality and ownership show:

- As of March 2023, 78% of all social housing stock in Wales fully complied with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard<sup>55</sup>;

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<sup>53</sup> Northern Ireland Government, [Department for Communities Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020-2025](#)

<sup>54</sup> Welsh Government, [Transforming Towns: support to improve town centres](#)

<sup>55</sup> Welsh Government, [Welsh Housing Quality Standard](#), March 2023

- In 2016, 96.9% of social housing met the Decent Homes Standard in Northern Ireland<sup>56</sup>;
- In 2017, 63% of social rented dwellings met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard<sup>57</sup>;
- In 2022-23, 89% of local authority and 90% of housing association rented accommodation met the Decent Homes Standard in England<sup>58</sup>;
- Modelling of 2019 data indicates that patterns of non-decency are not consistent across England, with higher proportions of non-decent social rented homes in the South West and Welsh borders compared to other areas<sup>59</sup>; and
- In the three years to 2022-23, there were approximately 874,000 first time buyers in England, 36% of whom reported receiving financial help from family and friends, up from 27% the previous year<sup>60</sup>.

The levelling up housing mission aims to address this situation by increasing the number of first-time buyers and reducing the number of non-decent rented homes, in particular in the lowest performing areas.

#### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The housing missions aims to get more people across the UK on the housing ladder and ensure that those renting live in decent homes.

Housing is devolved. Both the UK Government and devolved administrations have a shared objective in increasing home ownership and improving the quality of rented homes, to ensure that people can live in decent homes in every part of the UK. For example, Wales recently published the ‘Welsh Quality Housing Standard 2023’<sup>61</sup>, setting out the minimum quality standard for social rented homes. Quality of all homes and the rented housing sector also forms part of the Scottish Government’s ‘Housing to 2040’<sup>62</sup>

DLUHC, as the lead UK Government department, regularly engages with counterparts in the devolved administrations to discuss housing policy as a way of sharing learnings and best practice, and looks to continue the regular engagement in the future.

#### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

The headline metric for housing quality is the proportion of rented homes that do not meet the decent homes standard. This data is available for England only, reflective of the fact that housing is devolved in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and public metrics are produced separately. This metric is publicly available and routinely updated. Estimates at a national level, or for all tenures at regional level, are available through English Housing Survey (EHS) reporting. More granular local authority level estimates of non-decency are published as a separate output using EHS data.

The headline metric for first time buyers is in development, with a commitment for a publicly available metric for annual first-time buyer numbers at a regional level within the next year, and an aspiration for UK-wide data. In the interim, publicly available and routinely updated England-only data from the EHS can be used to estimate first time buyers at a national, London or the rest of England level.

<sup>56</sup> Housing Executive, [House Condition Survey – Table 6.12](#)

<sup>57</sup> Scottish Government, [Scottish House Condition Survey](#), 2017

<sup>58</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, [English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023 Headline Report](#), Annex Table 4.3

<sup>59</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, [English Housing Survey: local authority housing stock condition modelling, 2019](#)

<sup>60</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, [Chapter 2: Housing costs and affordability, Chapters for English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023 Headline Report](#), 2023

<sup>61</sup> Welsh Government, [Welsh Quality Housing Standard](#), 2023

<sup>62</sup> Scottish Government, [Housing to 2040](#), 2021

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the housing mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## Mission 11: Crime

**By 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst affected areas.**

### What is the picture across the UK?

Metrics used to monitor the rates and prevalence of crime show disparities across the UK:

- In 2019-2022, the rate of homicide offences per million population was 10.9 in England and 9.7 in Wales.<sup>63</sup>
- Unlike in England and Wales, the number of offences in Scotland represents the number of complete acts of homicide, regardless of the number of victims killed in each incident. In 2022, Northern Ireland had the highest rate of homicide in the UK, at 12.6 offences per million population. The rate in England and Wales (combined) was 11.7, followed by Scotland which had 9.5 offences per million.<sup>64</sup> There was variation within all parts of the UK and in Apr 2019-Mar 22, the homicide rate per million population was 14.8 in London, the highest of any region in the UK.<sup>65</sup>
- For neighbourhood crime across England and Wales, in March 2019, 28 Police Force Areas contained at least 1% of the 20% worst affected LSOAs; 27 of these are in England and 1 of these is in Wales.

The levelling up crime mission aims to address this situation by focussing on reducing homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime in the worst affected areas.

### What are the roles of the devolved administrations in connection with the mission?

The crime mission set an ambition to reduce homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime focused on the worst affected areas across the UK.

Policing and justice are devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland, while they are reserved in Wales. The UK Government works closely with the devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland on crime and policing, to ensure that we are aligned on key areas and to enable the sharing of best practice. This includes engagement via the Home Office's Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration.

In addition, representatives of Police Scotland and Police Service of Northern Ireland and their devolved administrations are invited to attend, on an annual basis, the Home Secretary's National Policing Board. This provides an opportunity to engage on cross-cutting issues, while respecting that territorial policing is a devolved matter in both Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### How do the metrics selected for the mission reflect the roles of the devolved administrations?

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<sup>63</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#), 2023

<sup>64</sup> UK Parliament, [Homicide Statistics](#), 2023

<sup>65</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#), 2023



Data for the crime mission headline metrics on homicide and serious violence is publicly available at police force area level in England and Wales only. Sub-national data on neighbourhood crime is in development.

Scotland and Northern Ireland record crime separately to England and Wales. The Scottish Government publishes data for Scotland, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland publishes data for Northern Ireland.

As with all the levelling up missions, it is the UK Government's responsibility alone to report on performance against the crime mission to Parliament in Westminster, via an annual levelling up missions report, and this does not create new reporting responsibilities for the devolved administrations.

## **Mission 12: Local Leadership**

**By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.**

The Levelling Up White Paper set out the Government's vision for empowering local communities and leaders. This mission reflects our ambitions in England.

We are clear that we want to work with all levels of government to deliver effective outcomes for people and communities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. City & Growth Deals in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been exemplars of collaboration between all tiers of government - UK Government, devolved administrations, and local government. Where Deals are sufficiently advanced, they have acted as a catalyst for public, private, and civil society sector collaboration across a range of economic priorities, and successfully unlocked a series of projects at scale that may not otherwise have emerged.

The UK Government is keen to support the benefits of local government devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to build effective partnership working, where it makes sense for local leaders, to deliver good outcomes for citizens.