



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Pride in Place

25th September 2025

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# Secretary of State Foreword

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**As a nation we have so much that unites us; a proud history, a National Health Service, cultural and scientific contributions that are the envy of the world, democracy, diversity and decency across our communities. We are also a country of a thousand neighbourhoods, where our identity, our sense of patriotism, and feelings of belonging, all depend on what we can see from our doorstep.**

That view from every doorstep is the nation's barometer of whether their government is doing a good job. When people looked out on their communities after 14 years of the previous government, they saw a future they didn't ask for. High streets changed beyond recognition. Local pubs boarded up. Public services no longer reliable. People no longer felt in control of when they could go out, because crime became rampant.

The impact of this decline in local pride has been corrosive. It divides communities, deprives public institutions of trust, and emboldens extremists to attack the foundations of our country.

The causes aren't straight forward – austerity, deindustrialisation, an uncritical embrace of globalisation are all a part of it – but what connects it all is a style of government which deprived people of control. Leaders have a choice; we don't have to follow the well-trodden path of hoarding power and micromanaging from dark corridors in Whitehall. Decisions about communities, made without them. This Government sees an alternative – putting people in control of their lives, and their local area.

This is about local people calling the shots. I'll never forget the day my Dad, my Grandparents, my Aunt and my Uncle all lost their jobs when the printing industry collapsed in Watford. I don't want anyone to feel as lost and helpless as they did, yet I know the pain they felt was shared right across this nation's former industrial heartlands. Today, however, when people see their seafront symbols of pride become asylum hotels, or when they remember the libraries and leisure centres lost to austerity, they feel those same feelings of being out of control.

Through our Pride in Place Programme, we are helping communities take back control. This is a whole of government pilot in sharing power, backed up by record investment to be announced by the Prime Minister. I know from my time at Lambeth Council that when the problem is a 'we know best' attitude from those at the top, the answer can only be found in communities themselves. The cure for our problems today is in the pit villages, where hands that once took coal from the ground, also built welfare halls for their families to make memories. The cure is in the classrooms, where under crumbling roofs, parents put on after-school clubs and summer fetes. The cure is Sunday league football grounds, where the next generation support their town with the same passion as they'd support their nation in the World Cup.

Make no mistake that this is a pilot in a new way of governing, and it dwarfs anything that has come before. The Party, founded a hundred years ago to serve working families, is today putting working families in control of their lives and their neighbourhood. This is our alternative to the forces trying to pull us apart. This is our answer to those who feel silenced, ignored and forgotten.



The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP

**Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing,  
Communities and Local Government**



# Introduction

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1. This Government was elected to deliver a decade of national renewal. The measures of success cannot just be shifts in national statistics but must include change that people see and feel in their local community.
2. There is much to celebrate already: according to the World Values Survey<sup>1</sup> the UK has among the highest levels of trust internationally and, as per the Community Life Survey, 61% of respondents said they belonged very or fairly strongly to their neighbourhood<sup>2</sup> and 81% of people agreed that their local place is somewhere people from different backgrounds get along.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Values Survey. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/the-state-of-social-trust.pdf>. 2022.

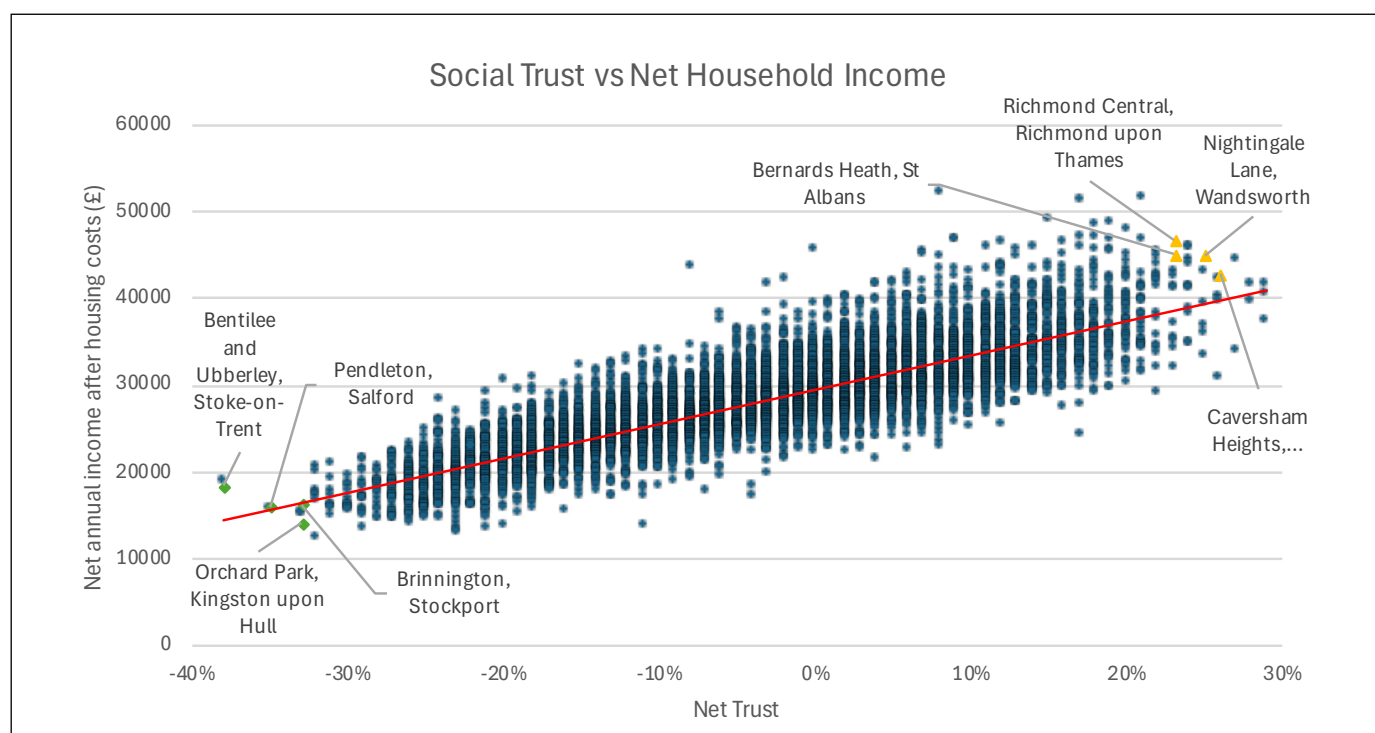
<sup>2</sup> Department for Culture, Media & Sport. [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Neighbourhood and community](#) - GOV.UK. 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Culture, Media & Sport. [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Neighbourhood and community](#) - GOV.UK. 2024.

3. However, after more than a decade of austerity, people feel disempowered. Too many neighbourhoods have been let down by the broken promises of renewal and communities left to fall into decline, whether through the loss of their local community centre, run-down and tired high streets, or the long waiting list to see their GP. But the effects have not been felt equally - coastal and coalfield communities, market towns, and those furthest away from large cities are among those worst affected. The Government will turn the tide on this trend and deliver change in every corner of the country.
4. Nothing will be solved if government continues to do things for people, rather than with people. That is why we are shifting power and funding away from Westminster. In the English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, we set out ambitious plans to rewire England and devolve power and funding to local leaders who know their area best. We will simplify and standardise regional governance with universal coverage of Mayoral devolution and Strategic Authorities – a number of councils working together over areas that people recognise and work in – preferably with a mayor to provide strong local leadership and accountability.
5. The implementation of our Devolution Priority Programme announced in February will, subject to local agreement, mean that just over 44 million people in England will soon be covered by mayoral devolution. It will mean that 67% of our regions will have a local mayor able to drive local growth through transport, skills, housing, economic development and planning powers with a convening role to bring all stakeholders together on local priorities.
6. Alongside Strategic Authorities, we know we must support all layers of government to properly rebuild and deliver on local priorities. This year's Local Government Finance Settlement made available £69 billion in funding for local authorities in England, a 6.8% increase in cash terms in councils' Core Spending Power compared to 2024-25. Our reforms to local government funding will give councils greater flexibility to focus on local priorities, simplify the complex web of funding pots and pave the way for the first multi-year Settlement in a decade. As part of this, on 20 June we published the Fair Funding Review 2.0, through which we are consulting on proposals to redirect around £2 billion of existing funding to the places and communities that need it most.
7. The launch of this Pride in Place Strategy is another step in this direction, developed in consultation with the communities impacted. It represents a break from the past, a new way for government to work in partnership with communities and neighbourhoods, empowering them with the tools and levers to drive meaningful change that reflects their priorities.
8. Wherever you go across the country, communities are brimming with ideas. They know what the issues are and what change is needed to fix them. They just need the backing of the Government to make it happen. The Pride in Place Strategy does just that.

## Why neighbourhoods and communities matter

9. Strong neighbourhoods and communities are vital to drive growth. Strong social capital contributes to improved socio-economic outcomes in wellbeing, education, crime and health.<sup>4</sup> It also fosters innovation, reducing transaction costs and facilitating better decision-making.<sup>5</sup> Social trust, a key part of social capital, is strongly linked to increases in productivity and income,<sup>6</sup> and neighbourhoods with high net trust tend to have lower levels of deprivation and higher average incomes after housing costs. In the wealthiest areas, net trust is around +12%; however, net trust falls to -22% in the poorest areas.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 1: Levels of social trust versus net household income in MSOAs.** Source: Focaldata and ONS (2023).

10. Many neighbourhoods and communities feel they have been left behind and let down by years of decline, systemic under-investment, the legacies of deindustrialisation and the failure of ‘Levelling Up’ – without the means to deliver the change they want for their area.
11. We know that when communities come together they can thrive. As we saw during the pandemic, people step up in times of need to support each other. Whether helping vulnerable neighbours with groceries or picking up prescriptions for the elderly, community bonds remain intact, even if not overtly visible every day. Neighbourhoods all across the country achieve amazing things when they are resourced and empowered to

<sup>4</sup> Local Trust. *Social Capital 2025: The case for strengthening social bonds to prevent crime*. 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Performance and Innovation Unit. *Social capital - what is it, and what does it imply for policy*. 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Local Trust. *Social-Capital-2025 The-Hidden-Wealth-of-Nations.pdf*. 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Onward. *Good Neighbours: How do levels of hyper-local trust vary and why does it matter?* | Onward. 2023.



do so. Community action can also be a powerful force for good, as we saw last summer when people rallied round and came together to help repair the damage and divide stoked by extremists.

12. Clearly, there is untapped opportunity and potential within our communities. We must harness this by providing them with increased resources and stronger powers, recognising the impact that broader macroeconomic and societal trends have had over the course of the last decade:
  - a. Between 2010-2022 productivity stagnated, with annual average growth in GDP per hour worked at just 0.5%.<sup>8</sup> This has led to stagnant wages in the country's most deprived neighbourhoods. On average, real gross value added per capita in communities facing the most acute set of economic and social challenges is still less than half that of other areas that qualify as deprived.<sup>9</sup>
  - b. Communities are losing the things in their neighbourhoods that matter most to them: 276 libraries closed between 2010 and 2023,<sup>10</sup> and since 2009, the number of pubs in the UK has fallen by nearly 11,000, a decline of around 20%.<sup>11</sup> 500 swimming pools have been lost since 2010, of which almost half (42%) have been lost since 2020.<sup>12</sup>
  - c. Since 2010 the number of high-street banks in England and Wales has fallen by 62%<sup>13</sup> and the high street vacancy rate post-pandemic sits at 14%.<sup>14</sup>
  - d. More people believe that their neighbourhood is getting worse. According to the Community Life Survey 2023/24, only 11% of people reported that over the last two years their area has got better to live in, whereas more than twice as many people (29%) reported that their area had got worse.<sup>15</sup>
13. People feel their country is divided – according to Ipsos polling, two-thirds (68%) of people believe Britain is more divided than it was a decade ago.<sup>16</sup> People feel they are more disconnected from each other: approximately 3.1 million people in England feel lonely often or always.<sup>17</sup> For some places (see the combined Community Needs Index and deprivation map below) and their residents, these changes have been more marked. Figure 2 below combines deprivation data with data on access to places where people can meet, connectedness to the wider economy and the presence of active and engaged communities to identify those areas facing the greatest social infrastructure challenges. There are stark differences between places.

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<sup>8</sup> The Productivity Institute. [What explains the UK's productivity problem?](#) - The Productivity Institute. 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Local Trust. [Breaking-the-cycle-report.pdf](#). 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Arts Council England, Basic Libraries Dataset. [Supporting libraries](#) | Arts Council England. 2023.

<sup>11</sup> BBPA Data & Statistics | BBPA

<sup>12</sup> UK Active. [Pace of swimming pool closures increasing warn Swim England and ukactive](#) | ukactive. 2025.

<sup>13</sup> Public First. [High Streets have changed dramatically over the past 15 years. And much of the public isn't happy about it.](#) - Public First <https://veritygroup.uk/1-in-7-shops-vacant-uk/>. 2024.

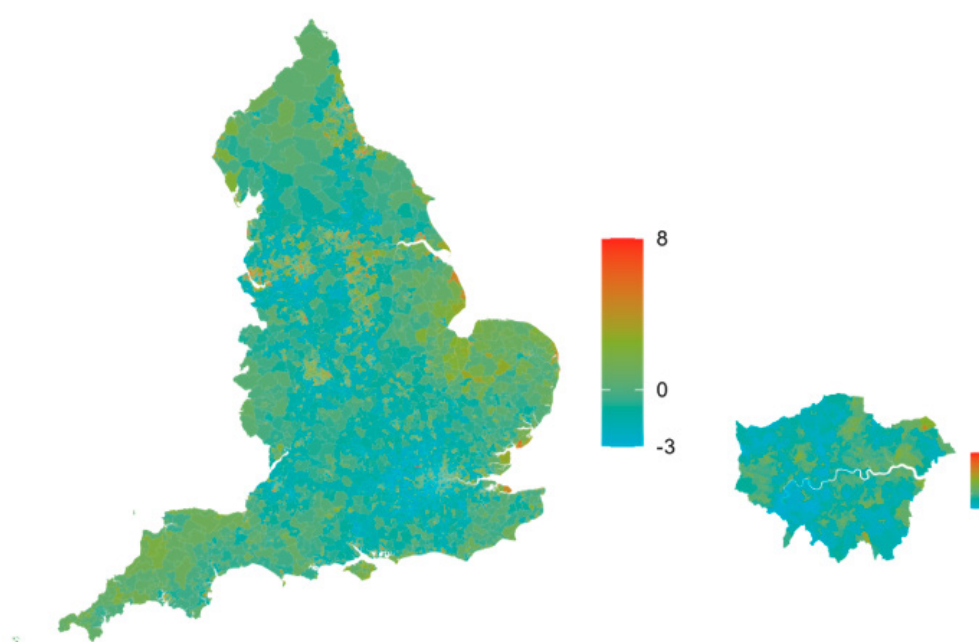
<sup>14</sup> Local Data Company: [High streets: A decade in review](#). 2024.

<sup>15</sup> [Community Life Survey 2023/24 annual publication](#) - GOV.UK

<sup>16</sup> Ipsos. [A year on from Southport and subsequent riots, 8 in 10 continue to say Britain is divided](#) | Ipsos. 2025

<sup>17</sup> Department for Culture, Media & Sport. [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Loneliness and support networks](#) - GOV.UK. 2024.

Combined standardised IMD and CNI



**Figure 2: Combined standardised scores for deprivation and Community Needs Index (measuring social and community infrastructure).** Areas with the highest score have the highest levels of need.

14. Many of the areas with the weakest social infrastructure also experience some of the highest levels of deprivation. Recent analysis shows that these neighbourhoods not only experience socio-economic disadvantage (higher rates of unemployment, lower educational and health outcomes) but also weakened social capital.<sup>18</sup> For people living in these ‘doubly disadvantaged’ neighbourhoods, a significantly higher percentage report living in bad or very bad health (10%), compared to people living in ‘less’ deprived areas (8%) and ‘non-deprived’ areas (4.7%).<sup>19</sup> This stark reality means that a woman born in Blackpool can expect to live 17 healthy years fewer than a woman born in Wokingham, while a man born in Kingston upon Hull can expect to live 21 healthy years fewer than a man born in Rutland.<sup>20</sup>
15. Whilst many communities are faced with these challenges, many feel that local and national government does not listen to their concerns or support them when they try to solve the issues they face. According to the Community Life Survey 2023/24, 50% of adults across England consider it important to be able to influence decisions affecting their local area, but only 23% think they can – with significant variance from place to place.<sup>21</sup> Often people struggle to influence decisions because they don’t know who to speak with. For too long, local and national government have not had community engagement and participation hardwired into the way it works.

<sup>18</sup> Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods. [Think-Neighbourhoods-Report-Web-FINAL-1.pdf](#). 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Local Trust. [Breaking-the-cycle-report.pdf](#). 2024.

<sup>20</sup> The Health Foundation, [Map of healthy life expectancy at birth | The Health Foundation](#). 2025.

<sup>21</sup> DCMS Community Life Survey 2023/24 results: [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Civic engagement and social action - GOV.UK](#). 2024.

16. No longer can we afford to shy away from these problems. In every neighbourhood there are people ready to rise to this challenge and help shape the solutions. We invited citizens from across the country to take part in workshops, roundtables, focus groups and debates aimed at imagining a more positive future for their community. We asked them what they needed from government to make this a reality – these insights have informed the development of this strategy.
17. Producing a plan is the easy part and this document does not pretend to contain all the answers. To achieve transformative change, we need to follow the evidence and review how the proposals within this strategy are felt on the ground in neighbourhoods and communities across the country. It is clear though that, if given the tools, funding and support, people can come together to make their neighbourhood a better place to live. That is what we are seeking to set out through the Pride in Place Strategy.
18. This strategy sets out our overall vision for communities and neighbourhoods in England. The Pride in Place Programme and Pride in Place Impact Fund Pride will operate in England, Wales and Scotland. The wider policies within this strategy are largely England-only, unless otherwise specified. We will continue to work with the Devolved Governments to align priorities across governments and support communities and neighbourhoods in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

# Our Action Plan



19. We will not repeat the mistakes of the past. We are moving away from micro-managed short-term pots of money and pitting communities against one another to bid for them.
20. As a government, we believe in the power of partnership and local leadership – that by working with residents, councils, businesses and community organisations and producing a clear vision, more neighbourhoods can be revitalised.
21. The English Devolution White Paper set out our plans for a radical shift in the wiring of the state, rolling out streamlined and simplified regional governance with Strategic Authorities across England, alongside unprecedented powers and budgets for Mayors. As part of this, Mayoral Strategic Authorities will produce and publish Local Growth Plans to drive productivity, economic growth, and investment in their regions over the long-term. Our reforms to local government funding will likewise support councils to plan for the long-term and address the most pressing local issues, paving the way for the first multi-year settlement in decades.



22. Our commitment to a comprehensive set of reforms for public services will help fix the foundations of local government. But we know we must go further in some of our most doubly disadvantaged places and create safer, healthier neighbourhoods where communities can thrive. We will deliver a step change in how we support communities across the country.
23. The strategy goes further than anything we have done before, giving communities the resources and tools to drive change themselves and shape their neighbourhoods for the better. That means delivering funding directly to the neighbourhoods that need it most.

## Pride in Place Programme

24. The Pride in Place Programme is our downpayment on that idea. On 4th March, we announced a new £1.5 billion programme, delivering up to £20 million of funding and support over the next decade into 75 places from across the UK. This funding makes good on promises made to each of these places, all part of the last government's Long Term Plan for Towns, but puts power in the hands of communities to shape the future of their area.
25. From Grimsby to Elgin, Coleraine to Wrexham, we have listened to the feedback of local stakeholders and applied the learnings from the New Deal for Communities which ran between 1998 and 2010.
26. Local people know what changes are needed for their community to thrive. That is why the decision-making on how and where this funding is spent sits with a Neighbourhood Board, led by an independent Chair, that includes residents, local businesses, civil society and community organisations, working in partnership with their respective local authority. Boards might decide to spend their funding on the regeneration of a town square, local community centre or social club, the development of a new community garden, the rollout of a new programme to tackle homelessness or services to tackle child poverty and provide essential support to families and young people. Similarly, they may choose to use the funding to develop an action plan to address local cohesion issues, or local arts, cultural, heritage and sport initiatives.

“We know what we need in this area.”

**Citizens' panel participant**

## Expanding the Pride in Place Programme

27. **We are now building on the Pride in Place Programme, expanding this model to an additional 169 of the most in-need neighbourhoods across England, Scotland and Wales.** This hyper-local programme will deliver £20m of funding over the next decade into areas that are 'doubly disadvantaged' by both the highest deprivation levels and weakest social infrastructure, focused on neighbourhoods of c.10,000 population. At the 2025 Spending Review, we announced the first 'trailblazer' areas, who we are engaging with to help shape the programme
28. The expanded programme retains the core components from the existing Pride in Place Programme, embedding flexibility, long-termism and bringing local people into the decisions that shape their neighbourhood. But we have also taken the learnings to



develop the model further and strengthen our approach. The additional places focus on smaller geographies, targeting hyper-local pockets of deprivation which have too often fallen through the cracks of national interventions.

29. Taken together, the Pride in Place Programme represents one of the largest investments in deprived neighbourhoods for a generation – up to £5 billion over 10 years to support up to 250 places. The expansion will continue to put decision-making power in the hands of local people, so those most affected call the shots. It offers the flexibility to respond to local needs and opportunities, supported by an extensive menu of interventions that set out how places can make best use of this funding, though with the ability to choose others, and provides long-term funding so communities can put plans together that can genuinely rebuild and transform their neighbourhoods.
30. Central government will work across departments to ensure this funding is a catalyst for these communities to have a say in the services delivered locally and we will work with external partners – including philanthropists, social investors and socially-minded businesses – to crowd in extra funding and activity.
31. Underpinning the funding are three core objectives:
  - a. **To build stronger communities** – All places should have strong relationships and a collective sense of belonging to their community. This helps bring people together to build community cohesion and resilience, helping people to feel proud of their area and safe in their neighbourhood.
  - b. **To create thriving places** – Every part of the UK deserves to have vibrant neighbourhoods and communities with busy high streets, a good range of local amenities and high-quality physical infrastructure.
  - c. **To empower people to take back control** – Everybody should be empowered and in control of their lives and have a say over the future of their community.

## Pride in Place Impact Fund

32. The Pride in Place Programme will target long-term investment to the communities that need it most, but we know that other places need immediate support to address the issues that matter locally, whether that means ensuring that their high street lives up to its potential or creating spaces to enable communities to connect and thrive.
33. The Pride in Place Impact Fund will provide a further £150 million of funding to up to 95 places across England, Scotland and Wales to support the development of shared spaces, revitalise local high streets and improve public spaces.
34. Each place will receive £1.5 million over two years to enable immediate work to make sure that the places and spaces valued by communities are improved and match the pride they feel for their local areas.
35. The programme will be locally led and will support improvements that reflect the pride and potential of each place. How these changes take shape will vary, informed by local context and priorities. The approach encourages locally grounded change, recognising the value of lived experience and the connections people have to the places they care about.

36. Underpinning the funding are three core objectives:
- a. **Community spaces** – Investing in community facilities gives local people greater control over the spaces that matter to them. Refurbishing or taking ownership of underused but valued buildings enables communities to create welcoming places for connection, support and shared activity. This builds local pride, strengthens relationships and gives communities a stronger voice in shaping their future.
  - b. **Public spaces** – Enhancing the physical environment helps communities feel safer, more connected and proud of where they live. Improvements to green areas, play and leisure facilities, and thoughtful design features such as seating, signage and public art make spaces more inclusive and inviting. These changes encourage people to spend time outdoors, build relationships and take part in local activities, strengthening community spirit and wellbeing.
  - c. **High street and town centre revitalisation** – Revitalising high streets makes them more attractive and welcoming, encouraging people to come together and boosting local pride. Improvements to buildings, streets and public spaces support footfall, help small businesses thrive and create opportunities for social and cultural activity. By investing in these areas, communities can shape vibrant, inclusive places that support local economies and strengthen community identity.

## Delivering change everywhere

37. Taken together, the Pride in Place Programme and Pride in Place Impact Fund provide significant investment to the most deprived places in the UK. This Government knows that the objectives underpinning this investment are the basis upon which successful communities are built.
38. Beyond this targeted funding we will also provide neighbourhoods across the country with a range of levers to promote thriving places, to build stronger communities and to take back control. We want to make it as easy as possible for communities to make the changes they want to see in their neighbourhoods, acknowledging that local people are best placed to understand local need.
39. The following chapters set out the range of activity government is undertaking over the course of this Parliament to support all places to drive the change their places need.

# Building Stronger Communities

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**Communities thrive when there are strong connections between people from all walks of life. These connections are the foundation on which community cohesion, resilience, integration, safety, trust and belonging are built. We will invest in the spaces and structures that bring people together and restore a sense of pride in the places we live.**

## Bringing people together

“A community only works if we work together.”

Online debate participant

40. Our communities are incredibly strong. We saw this in the ways we responded to the pandemic, and in our everyday acts of generosity, solidarity and neighbourliness. However, connection and cohesion are not guaranteed – they must be nurtured.
41. To build bridges across communities, we must ensure there are good quality physical spaces for people to come together in, and activities available to engage us in joint interests beyond the home and the workplace. From five-a-side pitches and trades institutes to community owned hubs and social clubs, strong communities need shared spaces. These spaces have been the traditional heart of the community – whether run by volunteers, set up as a member cooperative, or organised through groups of workers.
42. Yet, as highlighted above, many community spaces sit in a state of disrepair, are not fit for purpose or do not serve community needs. As ONS data shows, there is a link between a lack of shared community spaces and poorer cohesion outcomes for an area. However, it is not just the lack of shared spaces which inhibits social mixing – the poor quality of remaining spaces also deters people from using them as places to come together. We see this in the declining rates of membership to social clubs and trade institutes, where once people across a community would have come together beyond their working lives.
43. This is why we are putting shared community spaces at the heart of our plans for the Pride in Place Impact Fund. This new funding will enable communities to **regenerate valued local spaces and community assets**, bringing them back into use. From disused churches and youth clubs to overgrown parks, undervalued social clubs and shuttered civic buildings, we will encourage communities to own and run these spaces themselves, ensuring that assets contribute to an area's vitality and local social infrastructure.
44. A new **Common Ground Resilience Fund** will also support community connection and cohesion by funding locally led interventions to build community resilience. It will provide almost £3m funding to local communities to insulate them against threats to local social cohesion and resilience. And when local or national threats do arise, our funding will support local people to tackle them at source. The new fund will also offer ways for people to celebrate and share best practice and good work already underway, to strengthen their communities and bring people together.
45. We also appreciate sport's great ability to bring people together – whether it's a Sunday league football match or a game of cricket on the village green, shared sporting passions can unite people from all backgrounds. Already, the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities programme has helped local clubs from Ayrshire to Anglesey, Strangford to Somerset, build new pitches and changing rooms, install floodlights, solar panels and goalposts. We have committed at least an additional £400 million to be invested in **new and upgraded grassroots sport facilities** in communities across the UK. We will now work closely with sporting bodies and local leaders to establish what each community needs and then set out further plans.
46. Sports clubs and other sporting institutions are often at the heart of their communities - physical manifestations of local history, culture and pride. We are exploring exciting new partnerships with national partners, local football clubs and other major sporting institutions to **bring local people together in trusted, well-loved football grounds**



**and other sporting venues** in towns and cities across England. We will continue to work with the English Football League and other key sporting partners to build on much of the great work already happening at grassroots level as we take this work forwards.

## Building connections

47. As well as the spaces to support people coming together, community connection at its simplest is about individual relationships and partnerships which must be supported and cultivated.
48. Schools and educational settings are the building blocks of community cohesion and resilience, bringing young people together from a range of backgrounds on a daily basis. We will continue to support the **Schools Linking Programme** in England – work which brings together children of different nationalities, faiths or beliefs, ages and other characteristics, to share experiences and make long-lasting friendships.
49. Alongside this, we will **continue to work closely with faith and belief stakeholders in England** on issues that matter to them and identify opportunities for more detailed engagement on specific policy issues, including the role of faith and belief in creating strong communities.
50. Government support was instrumental in the founding of Belong, the Cohesion and Integration Network. Today, we commit to continuing this strong partnership, to direct much-needed support to places where it is most needed across the UK. This includes government funding for Belong to develop **new national guidance and training for frontline partners tackling cohesion and resilience challenges**. This will be published in 2026, followed by a full programme of engagement, training, and support for council officers, civil servants and other key partners.

“You just need events that bring different people together: a meeting, a garden party, a barbeque: it doesn’t matter what it is, communities just need to come together and unite.”

**Youth panel participant**

51. We are also **committing a further £4.5m to the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund** to continue supporting people to connect and volunteer in some of the most disadvantaged areas across England. This will help communities in places such as Great Yarmouth, County Durham and Barrow-in-Furness to volunteer and develop their skills, confidence and social connections.
52. Recognising the huge contribution faith and belief groups make to our national life, we are continuing to **support Near Neighbours**, an programme which brings together neighbours in religiously and ethnically diverse communities to get to know each other better, build relationships of trust and collaborate on community initiatives.



## Near Neighbours

In 2023/24, Near Neighbours supported grassroots projects across England to bring people of different backgrounds together, fostering stronger, more connected communities. Through small grants, leadership training and community events, the programme helped build trust and reduce isolation.

### Creating spaces for connection

One standout project, Threads of Nations in East Lancashire, brought together people from different faiths and cultures through sewing classes. Participants learned new skills, shared stories and built friendships. The project culminated in a public exhibition celebrating their work. One participant said, *“no one was bothered about any ethnicity, any religion, we all mixed, and we worked together, and I made friends.”*

### Empowering young leaders

The *Catalyst* programme trained 69 young people in Birmingham and London in leadership, communication, and social action. 84% of participants said they felt more prepared to take on leadership roles in their communities and 78% reported a more positive view of diversity.

### Welcoming everyone

Near Neighbours helped launch 145 new *Places of Welcome* – community spaces offering hospitality and support. One volunteer in Leicester shared, “I never thought I’d be able to help so much. I’ve seen guests grow in confidence, and I feel more confident too.”

Near Neighbours continues to invest in local people and partnerships to build a more inclusive and resilient society.

## Keeping our communities safe

“I don’t feel part of the community when I don’t feel protected by the community.”

### Co-design workshop participant

53. Everyone should feel safe in their community, no matter where they live. It is only when our neighbourhoods feel safe that communities can come together and flourish. Confidence in policing has diminished, as neighbourhood officers have been pulled off the beat, weakening connections with the communities they serve.
54. More so, every community deserves local officers who understand what is needed to keep them safe and the public rightly expect their local neighbourhood police to be visible, pro-active, and accessible to their community.
55. We know that neighbourhood policing must sit at the heart of our policing model as it is a critical building block for helping communities feel safe. Together with police forces in England and Wales, we are **implementing a new Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee which will restore patrols to town centres** and give every neighbourhood named, contactable police officers to turn to.

56. As part of this guarantee, **every police force in England and Wales must have a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) lead and work with their local community to publish an ASB Action Plan**. New guidance has been circulated to all forces setting out how they should engage with local people in the development of this plan to better understand the impact of crime and ASB. This will give residents a say in how ASB is tackled in their neighbourhood and town centres. Forces will also be required to measure success, for example, including perceptions of safety, and communicate to the public the progress being made towards outcomes in action plans so that communities can provide ongoing feedback.
57. The Crime and Policing Bill will **give police forces in England and Wales stronger powers to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour**, including new Respect Orders for the most persistent offenders. The Bill also increases the maximum fine for breaches of Public Spaces Protection Orders and Community Protection Notices from £100 to £500 and enhances police powers to seize nuisance off-road bikes and other vehicles being used in an anti-social manner, helping to keep our streets safe. And we have recently consulted on proposals to reduce the timeframes for disposing seized vehicles used anti-socially. All these measures will help to keep our streets safe.
58. Finally, we know that shop theft inflicts huge damage on small businesses and communities, yet low-level offences too-often go unpunished. The smallest losses of revenue can be acutely painful for businesses, so **we will end the effective immunity granted to low level shop theft of goods under £200 introduced by the last government.**<sup>22</sup>

## Volunteering

59. Volunteering and social action are a critical part of civil society, serving as the primary, and often among the most impactful, ways that people can support their local communities. They bring people together and are a cornerstone of society, with more than half of England's adult population volunteering at least once a year.<sup>23</sup>
60. As well as serving in charities, volunteers deliver public services and create change in communities and local places. We want to encourage and enable as many people as possible to be involved in delivering positive change.
61. We will work with local communities and organisations to **co-produce policy priorities for enabling and encouraging volunteering and social action** for everyone, regardless of where they live or their life circumstances.
62. We are also working to make it easier for people to **find opportunities to volunteer in their communities**. There are currently more than 50 different volunteering brokerage platforms in England. This can make it complicated for volunteers to find a suitable role. Volunteer centres and online platforms are essential – but they need high quality data in order to benefit charities and volunteers. We are therefore exploring open data approaches to help charities match with the right volunteers on their first attempt, no matter which online platform or in-person volunteer centre they use.

<sup>22</sup> Applies in England and Wales only.

<sup>23</sup> [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Volunteering and charitable giving - GOV.UK](#)

- 63. Alongside schemes like the **Honours programme and the King's Award for Voluntary Service**, we are exploring further ways to shine a light on the extraordinary contribution everyday people are making to their communities right across the UK and to help people try out volunteering with causes that matter to them.
- 64. We will also work with the **newly established Honours Diversity and Outreach Committee** to promote regional diversity and encourage honours nominations for those in underrepresented communities in the UK.

## Celebrating our communities and heritage

- 65. Strong communities love where they live and take pride in the cultural assets they share. They come together to celebrate their unique heritage and recognise their community heroes. We understand the value of recognising our places and the key role this plays in restoring dignity and instilling a shared pride in communities.
- 66. In partnership with Arts Council England, **we will support organisations through the Creative Foundations Fund**. This new £85 million fund from DCMS and Arts Council England will support arts and cultural organisations in England to revitalise, restore, retrofit or renew cultural assets, including urgent work which prevents organisations from effectively delivering work for the public.
- 67. We **launched the Heritage Revival Fund** to help rescue and repurpose neglected historic buildings in England, enabling community organisations, charities and social enterprises to take ownership and repurpose sites such as theatres, department stores and former banks.
- 68. We also **launched the Heritage at Risk Capital Fund** to enable individuals and organisations in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England to rescue at-risk historic sites and buildings that bring people together, like shops, pubs, parks and town halls.
- 69. To recognise and raise awareness of the unique traditions, history and culture of communities across the UK, we will **create a new Inventory of Living Heritage**, to be regularly updated as part of the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- 70. We have launched the new **£20 million Museum Renewal Fund** – this is designed to support valued regional museums in England with links to local authorities. It will improve public access to collections and buildings, as well as supporting community and educational programmes ensuring that communities across England can continue to benefit from access to art and culture for years to come.
- 71. We have **expanded the Blue Plaque scheme** to be England-wide to celebrate the achievements of people who have made a significant contribution to their community or exceptional impact in their field from every town, city and village.

## Tackling loneliness

72. Approximately 3.1 million people in England feel lonely often or always,<sup>24</sup> and we know that there are links between feelings of loneliness and connection and people's sense of security, belonging and pride in our local community. For a community to be strong, we must fight back against loneliness.
73. We are supporting hundreds of professionals working to reduce loneliness in every area of England through the **Tackling Loneliness Hub**, an online platform facilitating knowledge-sharing and networking.
74. We are engaging with sports organisations and other sectors to **improve social connection for young men** and reduce the impact that loneliness and isolation can have on them and their communities, with further detail to be set out in the forthcoming National Youth Strategy.<sup>25</sup>
75. We have launched the **Digital Inclusion Action Plan**, helping local authorities connect residents with Wi-Fi and devices by enhancing community Wi-Fi services, free at the point of use, at a much larger number of libraries and community centres. This includes identifying and prioritising connections to 500 community hubs in deprived areas, and connecting 1 million digitally excluded people by 2025, including those in low-income housing, through donated connectivity and skills training.<sup>26</sup>

### Cornwall Libraries Partnership Working



Cornwall Libraries works closely with the Cornwall Council's Resettlement Team to create safe spaces where resettled Afghan families and established communities can come together to build stronger communities.

In Torpoint, library staff opened up the space for resettled families to come together and meet new people. Families were supported to become members of the library, learn how to use the facilities and share their stories.

The library offers an organic way to integrate through positive inclusion. Whilst visiting the library one young woman from a resettled family, very shy and self-conscious due to a speech impediment, heard the dementia choir singing in another part of the building.

<sup>24</sup> [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Loneliness and support networks - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>25</sup> Applies in England.

<sup>26</sup> BT Group will work with government to identify and prioritise hubs.

It was a beautiful piece of ‘library alchemy’ – the joy the woman felt in hearing the singing was clear and she explained how she wants to learn English to be able to sing with others here. Since this initial meeting of welcome, she has joined the singing group and joined the library art group. This has opened up her ability to build new friendships and to feel part of her community.

Torpoint also runs ‘Sustainability Sundays’ – repair shop-type events. Six Afghan women have come to these to watch other users sewing. Torpoint are now looking at some skill-sharing sessions with crafting and cooking in the Torpoint Library café.

The library team have also worked with the resettlement team to collate resources and knowledge to myth-bust when in conversation with local people about the new families. Together they have co-produced bookmarks to dispel some of the disinformation about resettled families and these have been placed in all reserved books.

This partnership continues to grow and has become one of two current focuses for the whole library service. It has resulted in a nomination for the Cornwall Council annual awards to recognise the positive openness to exploring shared opportunities.

## Cleaning up our communities

“We have a thing called Street Champions now... where you can report issues in your area. Whether it’s fly-tipping, street cleaning – whatever, which is great, because then you get to know your neighbours.”

**Citizens’ panel participant**

76. Pride in a local area is driven by how it looks and how it is cared for. Although most communities come together to keep their neighbourhood tidy, littering and fly-tipping continue to rise. In 2023-24, local authorities dealt with a reported 1.15 million fly-tipping incidents, 60 percent of which were household waste<sup>27</sup> and the cost to local authorities for keeping their streets clean was up to £886 million in 2023-24.<sup>28</sup>
77. We know that once an area becomes untidy, people do not feel as proud of the place they live which can lead to further littering and a rise in anti-social behaviour.<sup>29</sup> That is why we want to ensure that all communities have access to clean spaces to come together, whether that’s their local playground, park or beach.
78. Many local agencies, community organisations and passionate individuals are working together to tidy up areas. We are committed to supporting them and to making it easier for communities to be proud of their neighbourhood.

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<sup>27</sup> Fly-tipping statistics for England - GOV.UK

<sup>28</sup> Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2025 to 2026 budget - GOV.UK Street Cleansing expenditure

<sup>29</sup> Brailsford Parish Council. [News | Brailsford Parish Council](#)



79. To support local authorities to use their existing powers to keep spaces clean, we plan to **bring forward statutory enforcement guidance on both littering and fly-tipping**.<sup>30</sup>  
This will help local authorities to consistently and appropriately exercise these powers which can include issuing penalty notices for fly-tipping and searching and seizing vehicles linked to fly-tipping.
80. We will **refresh and modernise the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse** in England to improve local authorities' understanding of their duties to keep our neighbourhoods and town centres free of litter.
81. Everyone can contribute to cleaning up their area. We will **develop a toolkit** which includes a set of principles which can be endorsed and followed by residents, businesses, community organisations and local agencies in recognition of the collective commitment and effort required to enjoy living in a clean neighbourhood. This will also set out the range of powers local authorities can draw upon.<sup>31</sup>
82. To further support local authorities across England to improve the aesthetic of local areas, we will **refresh the best practice guidance** on S215 powers in the Town & Country Planning Act. These powers enable local authorities to force land and building owners to clean up their premises and tackle untidy gardens and derelict buildings.

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<sup>30</sup> Applies in England.

<sup>31</sup> Applies in England.

# Creating Thriving Places

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**Years of austerity and economic malaise has seen the public realm erode, holding back people and places across the country. We are committed to turning around this trend, enabling places to thrive and people to feel proud of where they live. That means fostering vibrant town centres and creating neighbourhoods that are healthy and safe, with access to a good range of amenities, services, green spaces and high-quality infrastructure.**

## **Vibrant high streets and town centres**

83. Our high streets and town centres have come under intense strain, with the shift to online and out of town retail reducing footfall, a trend exacerbated by the pandemic and cost of living pressures. Increased vacancy, and the loss of once dominant anchor stores, have left a physical scar on town centres, encouraged anti-social behaviour, and eroded public sentiment.

84. But high streets remain at the heart of our communities. They are vital places of connection, and their condition has a huge bearing on how people feel about their community.<sup>32</sup> At their most successful, they are hubs of economic activity and visitor destinations.
85. We recognise that raising household incomes and living standards is the most powerful way to improve the fortunes of our high streets, putting more money in people's pockets to spend locally and boosting the corresponding supply of quality amenities. That is what the Plan for Change, including the new Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans, will deliver. But while the economic renewal of the nation will help drive high street revival, there are many other factors that influence success or failure. We will use each and every tool at our disposal to give communities their high streets back.
86. Changes in consumer habits, especially the trend to more online shopping, mean there is an oversupply of retail space in many places. High streets must adapt and diversify to meet this challenge, and the Government will support councils to realise that transformation.
87. As part of our consultation which we intend to publish later this year, **we will set out clearer policies on managing town centre uses in England**, encouraging local planning authorities to champion a flexible approach that supports adaptation and local economies. We will also consult on clearer policy to ensure developments meeting the definition of 'main town centre use' are allocated to existing vacant sites and previously developed land in town centres. And we will seek to increase housing density in suitable and sustainable locations, including around transport hubs.
88. Too many iconic buildings that once defined our high streets now sit as empty reminders of a bygone era. Converting these into much-needed homes, workspaces and cultural venues can be expensive and slow. We will implement **reforms to the compulsory purchase process and land compensation rules** introduced by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, making it clearer how local authorities can use these powers to regenerate their high streets.<sup>33</sup> This will reduce the administrative costs to local authorities of seeking a compulsory purchase order (CPO), speed-up decision making and modernise the CPO process to make it more flexible and streamlined. These reforms will enable the swifter rejuvenation of empty properties on the high street and ensure compensation is fair between acquiring authorities and landowners.
89. The future vitality of the high street will also depend on the ability of small businesses, community organisations, and the voluntary sector to access property opportunities and grow sustainably. The leasehold system at present undermines this aim, creating an antagonistic relationship between landlords and tenants and burdening small businesses with excessive costs and risk. Despite an increase in long-term vacancy and a surplus in retail space nationally, there has been no significant downwards pressure on rents, and some owners prefer to leave properties empty to avoid harming the value of their portfolio. In commercial tenancies, small enterprises often shoulder a disproportionate level of risk, with rents that may be both inflated and obliged not to fall if the market dips.

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<sup>32</sup> 72% of those surveyed by Nationwide in 2020 admitted to judging a town based on the state of its high street alone

<sup>33</sup> Applies in England and Wales.

90. While the Government recognises that most property owners act responsibly, we believe there is a need for a reset, with a fairer settlement for tenant occupiers and a stronger framework for landlords to participate on equal terms in the life of our high streets.
91. We have introduced legislation to **ban the use of unfair ‘upwards only rent review’ clauses** in England and Wales. We want to improve the equality of arms between landlords and tenants, and it is fundamental to fairness and the economic vitality of the high street and wider commercial sector that when vacancy rates are higher and supply outstrips demand, rents can fall. This targeted intervention will remove a manifestly unfair lease mechanism that runs against common sense market principles and hampers the growth of high street and town centre businesses. The Government recognises these clauses have an established role in valuing assets: we are committed to supporting the industry to adapt, but we are also clear that fair commercial leases are in the public interest.
92. We are committed to improving fairness for both landlords and tenants on our high streets. To that end, the Government has commissioned the Law Commission to conduct two further projects on commercial leasehold, currently focused on ‘security of tenure’ within the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. The Law Commission will carry out further work to **address flaws in in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 and the Landlord and Tenant (Covenants) Act 1995**, looking at issues such as rights of first refusal and anti-avoidance provisions that can be costly, burdensome and ultimately prevent sensible business transactions taking place. The review will also consider if further reform is needed to areas such as energy improvement incentives, dilapidations, and repairs and service charges. Tenants, landlords, and investors have long called for reform of these opaque and incoherent areas of law which, by their complexity, hinder market confidence and hold back growth.
93. We will also seek to empower property owners to play a fuller part in high street regeneration by strengthening the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) model. BIDs enable business rate payers in a defined area to contribute to a levy and invest in additional services, such as business support, street decorations and activity programmes. We have seen the impact they can have in places like Leeds and we want to see more of this across the country. However, at present, BIDs outside London cannot give property owners a formal role in shaping local priorities. To help ensure all areas can access the same tools to support growth and revitalise our high streets, **we will seek to legislate to allow property-owner BIDs to operate across the country as soon as parliamentary time allows**. This will help landlords work with councils, tenants, and communities to create thriving high streets. To complement this work, **we will act to make BIDs more transparent and accountable and consult on improvements to voting procedures**.



## Leeds Business Improvement District



In 2024, Leeds Business Improvement District (LeedsBID) partnered with global games company Hasbro, to create a free and immersive experience MONOPOLY Leeds Takeover which invited players to explore 22 locations and landmarks around the city. Players explored themed zones, solved puzzles and played mini games.

It brought in over half a million visitors to Leeds city centre over a five-week

period and the city saw an economic boost of over £6.5 million spent by people taking part. 90% of visitors stated that the trail made Leeds city centre a more attractive place to visit.

### Creating a lively high street

MONOPOLY Leeds Takeover pays homage to the origins of the famous fast-dealing property trading game, which was licensed to Leeds firm Waddingtons in 1935. The Takeover was designed to encourage footfall and dwell time, providing opportunity for people to spend money locally.

LeedsBID partnered with businesses and community organisations to host other events and activities to coincide with MONOPOLY Leeds Takeover, including:

- An exhibition at Leeds City Museum
- The unveiling of a Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque marking the heritage of Waddingtons
- Commissioning a mini documentary to celebrate Waddingtons' history
- Weekend workshops hosted by the Bank of England at Waterstones

LeedsBID have previously done other activation projects around the city with animatronic dinosaurs and Wonderland Awaits, an Alice in Wonderland inspired trail in 2025. These have generated significant income for businesses and created a lively city centre. LeedsBID is currently planning another Hasbro installation for summer 2026.

94. Reform of **business rates** has been a constant pillar of our commitment to high street revival. The Government has already taken through primary legislation to **enable lower rates for retail, hospitality and leisure** properties with rateable values less than £500,000 to be introduced from 2026-27.<sup>34</sup> On 11 September 2025, the Government also published the Transforming Business Rates: Interim Report which outlines the priority reforms that the Government will consider to improve the operation of the business rates system. The Government has confirmed this will include exploring

<sup>34</sup> Applies in England.

the case for enhancing Small Business Rate Relief to support business growth and investment, and that any reforms will continue to recognise the importance of high streets as a vital source of essential services, a focal point for communities, and the foundations of strong local economies.

95. The Government has confirmed it will take forward the conclusions of the Licensing Taskforce, reflecting the vital role of the hospitality industry and night-time economy in the evolving high street landscape, and the merits of rebalancing the licensing system, which many businesses feel has become too burdensome. We will launch a Call for Evidence shortly on reforms to reduce this burden and will pilot new powers for the Mayor of London – including a new ‘call-in’ power for strategically important licensing decisions – recognising the opportunity to boost London’s world renowned cultural and hospitality sectors through the adoption of a more joined-up and strategic approach to licensing across all London boroughs.
96. Importantly, we will continue to **drive forward the use of High Street Rental Auctions** to breathe new life back into high streets and transform long-term empty shops, combining fairness for tenants with even stronger incentives for landlords to be at the heart of high street regeneration plans. These powers enable councils in England to auction the lease of high street premises that have been empty for over a year in a two-year period.<sup>35</sup> Councils can conduct an auction from which the landlord is compelled to accept an offer. This creates a strong incentive for landlords to be proactive in seeking tenants even at lower rents, making it easier for community groups, small businesses, and the voluntary sector to use these valuable spaces for social and economic good. The powers have already been adopted in 11 local authorities including Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, and Lichfield, and we are working with councils across England to roll them out further to reduce the blight of vacancy on our high streets.

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<sup>35</sup> [High Street Rental Auctions: Non-statutory guidance - GOV.UK](#)

## Empty shop gets new lease of life in Rugby



Rugby Borough Council is the latest local authority unveiled to join the early adopter programme. As part of the Council's ongoing initiative to reduce the number of vacant retail units across the borough, the Council have been proactively engaged with property owners and agents of long-term vacant premises. This included a property that had remained unoccupied for over two years and had visibly fallen into disrepair.

During discussions, the agent revealed that although there was interest from potential tenants, the condition of the property and the high rental expectations were significant barriers. The landlord was unwilling to fund necessary renovations or reduce the rent, making the unit commercially unviable.

Council officers introduced the agent and landlord to the **High Street Rental Auction (HSRA)** process. This mechanism, designed to bring vacant high street properties back into use, was explained in detail, including the upcoming high street designation consultation scheduled for **July 2025**. The property was identified as a potential candidate for an auction.

Shortly after the Council's intervention and explanation of the HSRA process, the agent reported a significant shift in the landlord's position:

- The **rent was reduced** to a more market-appropriate level.
- The **landlord committed capital** to fund the necessary renovation works.

As a result, the lease was completed and from September the new occupiers are renovating the premises in advance of opening the doors to the public.

97. We also want to empower local authorities to curate healthy, vibrant public spaces that reflect the needs of their communities. For example, to strengthen councils' tools to influence the location and density of gambling outlets, **we will introduce Cumulative Impact Assessments in gambling licensing** when Parliamentary time allows.<sup>36</sup> This will allow local authorities to take data-driven decisions on premises licences, particularly in areas that have been identified as being vulnerable to gambling-related harm. This will empower local authorities to better shape their high streets and neighbourhoods, and to ensure a healthy mix of premises in their town and city centres.

<sup>36</sup> Applies in England, Scotland and Wales.

98. Shop front design can play an important role in the conservation, identity, and visual appeal of high streets, a key experiential advantage over online commerce. Despite councils already having powers to enforce standards, too often this is not prioritised. We will **explore ways to facilitate the sharing of best practice on shop front design guides, including through the Pride in Place Programme**.<sup>37</sup>
99. Recognising that town centres must be accessible to everyone in our communities, we must address the barriers that poor toilet provision can represent. We have therefore included the **provision of public toilets** as a pre-approved intervention for areas receiving Pride in Place Programme funding.<sup>38</sup>
100. The steps outlined above reflect the Government's ambition to revive our high streets with a more proactive, dynamic approach to transforming the built environment, lower costs and administration for high street tenants, and stronger partnerships between local stakeholders to galvanise activity. We will, finally, seek to instil these principles at a place level, working with elected Mayors. Through new **High Street and Growth Incubators** in Greater Manchester, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire Strategic Authorities, we will target funding via integrated settlements, aligning investment with Local Growth Plans, in order to upgrade high streets and support local businesses to adapt and grow.

## Healthier communities

101. Poor health has severe impacts on people's livelihoods, relationships and overall quality of life. The strain on our healthcare system and service providers remains a challenge and we must do more to enable people to live healthier lives for longer. We must transform our health provision and tackle the social determinants of health by enabling people to access healthcare within their immediate local area and giving local authorities the tools to enable them to create healthier, greener neighbourhoods where people can thrive. These actions are integral to reducing the gap in healthy life expectancy.
102. Being physically active is good for physical and mental health. Inactivity levels remain stubbornly high for adults and children, with huge inequalities across the country. The evidence is clear, where investment in physical activity is designed with local communities, inactivity rates are 2.5 percentage points lower than otherwise in the most deprived places.<sup>39</sup> **We will move to a place-based approach to physical activity across government departments:** through £250 million of investment into 100 places by Sport England; new partnerships on school sport, and local health plans. DCMS will set out more detail on the strategy for physical activity in due course.
103. As set out in the **10 Year Health Plan for England, we will move from a National Health Service to a Neighbourhood Health Service**. We had over a quarter of a million contributions from the public and health and care staff across the country to

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<sup>37</sup> Pride in Place Programme is across England, Scotland and Wales.

<sup>38</sup> Pride in Place Programme is across England, Scotland and Wales.

<sup>39</sup> Sport England. 'The English Sports Council Grant-in-Aid and National Lottery Distribution Fund: Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024', 2024. <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2025-03/Sport%20England%202023-24%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts.pdf?VersionId=bS6slUPg7d60up7KSBNd4AtUsldcs785>.



develop this plan and shape the future of our health service. This will radically shift care out of hospitals and into communities, and towards a model that focuses on prevention, inclusion and equitable access for those who need it most.

104. Neighbourhood services will be designed in a way that reflects the specific needs of local populations. While the focus on personalised, co-ordinated care will be consistent, that will mean the service offer will look different in rural communities, coastal towns or deprived inner cities.
105. Furthermore, patients will be active partners in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Health Service. All care plans will be co-created with patients and cover their holistic needs, not just their treatment. They will align with national standards for high-quality care but, within that, give patients significant choice and freedom.
106. We have also launched **Community Help Partnerships** in England. This is a £100 million investment integrated with wider spending across government – it represents a fundamental change in the Government’s approach to supporting adults with complex needs. By working closely with local areas to tackle barriers and change incentives, the new Community Help Partnerships will bring together a range of services to provide better support for adults in crisis and reach vulnerable individuals earlier, before problems escalate.
107. We must also work with communities to take a preventative approach to our most pressing health challenges, such as childhood obesity. Councils have historically lacked the tools to curb the proliferation of chicken shops and other unhealthy outlets near schools and the advertising of unhealthy foods, even as the majority of people want to see stronger action from their local authority in their community.<sup>40</sup>
108. We have therefore updated the National Planning Policy Framework to **empower local authorities to block the development of new hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets** within walking distance of schools and other areas where children and young people congregate, unless the location is within a designated town centre.<sup>41</sup> This builds on findings from Gateshead, where efforts to restrict fast-food outlets have been associated with lowering childhood obesity.
109. **Planners can also refuse applications** where the concentration of such uses is having an adverse impact on local health, as well as pollution or anti-social behaviour.
110. Similarly, there is a growing awareness of the causal links between unhealthy food advertising and food-related ill health. Learning from the examples of Bristol, York and Knowsley, as well as the TfL advertising ban in 2019, **we will empower local authorities in England that want to take stronger action against unhealthy out of home advertising** by producing a toolkit to share best practice. Working with DHSC and DCMS, the toolkit will be developed considering evidence and impacts. This will help local authorities implement their own advertising restrictions on unhealthy products and will support local leaders to protect public health.

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<sup>40</sup> YouGov/ Obesity Health Alliance. Voters Feel Let Down by Lack of Action on Childhood Obesity. 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Applies in England.

## Greener neighbourhoods

“Green spaces can bring people together, so they feel good about where they are.”

Youth roundtable participant

111. Green spaces, from the local pocket park or playing field, to our sweeping heritage parks, bring people together, improve health and wellbeing, mitigate climate change and increase biodiversity. They are the lungs of many urban areas and provide space for social mixing.
112. However, many communities struggle to access nature and the quality of their local parks and green spaces is inconsistent. We aim to remedy this, and by improving access to good quality green spaces, local communities will be able to harness the health, well-being and environmental benefits on their doorstep.
113. Investing in parks and green spaces saves costs and improves quality of life for local people. The **Return on Investment research**, due to be published shortly, shows that investment in parks can lead to savings through reducing health care costs, mitigating against climate change, boosting local businesses and reducing crime.
114. We are therefore supporting local areas to invest in their parks and green spaces and realise these benefits for local communities through the **Green Infrastructure Framework**.<sup>42</sup> This provides mapping tools and design guidance to support local authorities and planners to meet the commitment in the Environmental Improvement Plan for every household to be within a 15-minute walk of a green or blue space. We are developing a metric to measure our progress in delivering on this commitment and to this end have released two new Official Statistics in Development to date.
115. Furthermore, the government-owned **Green Flag Award** sets the international quality standard for parks and green spaces, helping to elevate the quality of and access to parks across our communities. We are awarding a five-year contract to Keep Britain Tidy to run the scheme and will be working with them to revamp the award so it better reflects the diversity of benefits that parks bring to our communities and continues to raise the standards of parks and green spaces for future generations.
116. We will also deliver on the manifesto commitment to **create three new national forests and nine new river walks in England**. We will officially launch the newly established King Charles III England Coast Path and Coast to Coast National Trail by early summer 2026.

## Better transport and connectivity

117. Transport connects people with those within and beyond their local area. It helps communities to attend health appointments, go to work, visit relatives and enjoy leisure activities.

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<sup>42</sup> Applies in England.

118. Everyone encounters delays, congestion, pollution or parking issues from time to time, but we also know that people have different experiences depending on where they live. It is vital that people have access to a system that works for them whether they walk, cycle, drive or use public transport. To help achieve this, we are investing across the country to improve our transport networks.
119. Through the **£15.6 billion Transport for City Regions settlements and £2.3 billion Local Transport Grant**, we are providing regions across England with the tools to improve everyday journeys, reduce congestion, and unlock growth.
120. Areas receiving a Local Transport Grant will also receive **highways maintenance, bus and active travel funding** giving councils additional cash to resurface roads and support new bus lanes, safer cycle routes, and zero-emission buses.
121. **£616 million funding will enable Active Travel England** to support local authorities to build and maintain local walking and cycling routes.
122. **We will introduce a government code of practice for private parking operators** to improve motorists' trust in the system and ensure poor behaviour is addressed.<sup>43</sup> This will be done through raising standards across the industry and ensuring operators are held to account through a new robust compliance framework.

## Meeting housing needs

123. Continued under-investment in housing over the last decade has resulted in acute housing pressure in many parts of the country, while many residential areas lack the critical infrastructure such as local schools, doctor's surgeries and community assets they need in order to thrive. We are investing in new homes and towns that will help those most in need.<sup>44</sup>
124. **We have committed to building 1.5 million homes in this Parliament**, as set out in the Plan for Change. These will be high-quality homes, supported by the necessary infrastructure, allowing people and local areas to thrive. Further detail will be set out in the Long-Term Housing Strategy, to be published later this year.
125. **Central to this effort is the £39 billion announced for a new 10-year Social and Affordable Homes Programme.** This represents the biggest long-term investment in social and affordable housing in recent memory **providing safe and decent homes for people who need them most.**
126. We will **build the next generation of New Towns.** It is not enough to build new homes. These new towns will be well-designed places with the good quality infrastructure and a range of amenities to support thriving, new communities.
127. The reforms introduced through the **Renters' Rights Bill will strengthen communities by transforming the experience of private renting.** We are ending Section 21 'no fault' evictions to give renters more security and stability so they can stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities and avoid the risk of homelessness.

<sup>43</sup> Applies in England, Scotland and Wales.

<sup>44</sup> The following housing policies apply in England.

128. Further reforms are underway which will **drive up standards in social housing**. We have laid regulations to bring Awaab's Law into force, meaning tenants will be able to get their landlord to fix damp and mould and other emergency hazards that could threaten their health within a fixed time period. We have also laid regulations for new electrical safety standards.
129. We have also published consultations on a new **Decent Homes Standard**, which is expected to improve living standards for 9.2 million people. This will raise the minimum standard that all social landlords must meet and introduce a new **Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard** which will mean homes are warmer and less susceptible to damp and mould.



# Helping Communities to Take Back Control of their own Lives and Areas

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**Communities are built through the hard work, time and imagination of people coming together. Right across the country, people have endless ideas to improve their neighbourhood – they just need the resources and tools to make that change happen. That is why we are putting more power in the hands of communities, giving them a greater stake in their area and economy and a stronger voice in the decisions that matter to them.**

## Giving communities a stronger voice in local decisions

130. For too long, communities up and down this country have felt that their voices have been ignored by those in power. Residents know best about what is needed in their neighbourhoods but are shut out of decisions that affect them and the places that they call home.
131. This is wrong. Instead, we want to empower communities across the country to have their say in local decisions and to influence the change that they want to see at a local level. Devolution is not just about bringing powers to regional Mayors, or even to local authorities. It's about making sure that everyone, regardless of where they live, sees government delivering the things that matter to them in their neighbourhoods.
132. To achieve that vision, and to give local areas a stronger voice in the decisions that matter to them, we will require **all local authorities in England to establish effective neighbourhood governance**. This will ensure that neighbourhood working is hardwired into how government works, and that local councillors are empowered to act on the issues that matter to people where they live. We will develop the details of this requirement by working with the local government and communities sector, to ensure we reflect the breadth of innovative good practice happening in many local authorities. This will be a foundation for improving neighbourhood engagement and partnership-working, and we will be developing our proposals in close collaboration with the sector.
133. Local plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of any given area and are developed through consultation with communities to address needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and essential infrastructure. **We are committed to getting full coverage of up-to-date local plans as soon as possible, to give communities more of a voice in shaping their areas.**<sup>45</sup> Over £29 million has been recently awarded to support plan-making and further reforms due later this year will ensure local plans are simpler, faster to prepare and more accessible, so that communities in every part of the country can more easily shape decisions about how to deliver housing and wider development.

“We don’t get involved in local decisions, we don’t get asked... I’m sure you can get involved if you really want to but it’s not an easy option.”

**Workshop participant**

## Giving communities a say in the future of their assets

134. Policies are too often done ‘to’ communities, rather than ‘with’ them. This results in a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach that doesn’t meet the different needs of places and the people who live in them. We want to empower people across the country to take back control of the decisions that impact them, with local residents able to actively drive positive change in their communities. That is why we are committing to giving communities new tools and powers to shape their areas – so that they can play a part in improving the very places that they are so passionate about.

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<sup>45</sup> Applies in England.

135. We will introduce **a new Community Right to Buy** to give communities more powers to take ownership of the spaces they value.<sup>46</sup> Communities are at risk of losing access to treasured spaces, such as playing fields, community centres and pubs when they are put up for sale. The current Community Right to Bid powers are often too weak to give communities a realistic chance of purchasing these assets, with short time periods to raise funding and no obligation on owners to consider community bids.
136. Our changes will empower communities to take control of local assets. Community groups will have a guaranteed right of first refusal on purchasing registered local assets when they are put up for sale and extended timeframes will support more communities to raise necessary funding. An **independent valuation process** will mean a fair price for both asset owners and community groups.
137. We are also **widening the definition of an asset of community value** to ensure that as many locally important assets as possible, including heritage buildings, come into scope of this policy change.<sup>47</sup>
138. Additionally, we will **introduce a new Sporting Asset of Community Value (SACV) designation** to give greater protections to sports grounds in England, making it easier for communities to take ownership of them.
139. **A new Co-operative Development Unit within MHCLG** will contribute to the doubling of the sector by supporting local authorities in England to grow their co-operative and mutual economy.

## Powering communities

140. Rising energy bills have increased heating costs for community centres and other community organisations, taking resource away from delivering the services that benefit their local area.
141. However, as we transition towards being a green superpower, changes to our energy policies and infrastructure are bringing benefits to communities across the country.
142. Great British Energy, the Government's publicly-owned clean energy company, has **awarded mayoral authorities a share of £10 million in grant funding to roll out clean energy projects at the centre of communities**. This includes leisure centres, libraries, fire stations and care homes that will benefit from cheaper energy bills as Great British Energy delivers on the Government's clean energy superpower mission to make working people and their communities better off.
143. **We have renewed the Great British Energy Community Fund to support communities with their transition to net zero.** This will help kickstart projects such as small-scale wind farms and rooftop solar partnerships in England, supporting revenue generation and reinvestment back into grassroots projects and community governance.
144. **We will ensure that communities in England, Scotland and Wales who host clean energy infrastructure can directly benefit.** For transmission infrastructure, we have published new guidance on community funds and introduced an electricity bill discount scheme via the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

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<sup>46</sup> Applies in England.

<sup>47</sup> Applies in England.

145. We have set out proposals to **introduce a mandatory community benefit scheme for low carbon energy infrastructure** in Great Britain, which would require developers to contribute a set amount to a community fund. We published a working paper in May to consult on these proposals. The consultation period ended in July 2025 and we will publish our response in due course. As part of this we also published a call for evidence on the shared ownership of energy infrastructure and the Government will set out its next steps in the Autumn.

## Empowering young people

146. Young people are the future leaders and changemakers of our communities. However, their voices are too often absent from conversations affecting their lives and their areas. We want to hand power back to young people and to give them a genuine opportunity to shape the policies that impact their lives, both now and in the future. Every young person deserves a happy and successful future and this Government is committed to enabling young people to thrive.
147. **We will continue to support the #iwill Fund in 2025/26, a £66 million joint investment with the National Lottery Community Fund** which provides youth social action opportunities to young people across England, particularly focusing on young people who would not normally have the opportunity to participate. Over the lifetime of the #iwill Fund, over 900,000 opportunities will have been created.
148. We will continue to provide young people with the chance to access activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer. **We are investing over £7.5 million in 2025/26 in the Uniformed Youth Fund** to ensure all young people have access to non-military Uniformed Youth Groups by establishing new groups in areas without existing provision and tackling waiting lists.
149. With £187 million in funding, we have launched the **TechFirst programme** to provide one million young people with AI and tech education opportunities, as part of our push to ensure that a career in AI and tech can be available to anyone from any background across the UK.
150. **We are co-producing our National Youth Strategy with young people in England**, putting their views at the centre of policies that affect them. The Strategy, due for publication this year, will make sure decision-making moves away from a one-size-fits all approach, handing power back to young people and their communities, and rebuilding a thriving and sustainable youth sector.
151. Learning from good practice seen in Oldham, by March 2026 we will work with local areas to explore opportunities to **establish new Youth Councils** across England. We will also continue to support the UK Youth Parliament in 2025/26, ensuring young people have their voices heard on issues that matter to them.

“Oldham’s Youth Council has an agenda item on every council meeting – this should be everywhere. Young people need to have their voices heard.”

**Youth roundtable participant**



## Oldham Youth Council



The Oldham Youth Council (OYC) is a dynamic body representing the voices of young people in Oldham, Greater Manchester. Established in 2006 to empower young people, the council engages individuals aged 11-21 (up to 25 for young people with SEND) in local governance, ensuring their perspectives influence decisions affecting their lives.

### OYC aims to:

- Empower young people to actively participate in shaping local policies and community projects.
- Provide a structured forum where young people can express opinions on issues impacting them.
- Build leadership, communication and advocacy skills among members.
- Promote inclusion and ensure diverse youth representation across Oldham.
- Collaborate with local government, schools and community organisations to drive youth-centric initiatives.

### How the Youth Council operates

The youth council are supported by Oldham Council's Youth Service team, who offer professional support and guidance. Members typically come from local schools, youth groups and community organisations, representing the diverse youth population of the area. Recruitment happens via biannual elections and there are also co-opted places available for underrepresented groups.

OYC meets every fortnight to discuss issues that matter to young people in Oldham. Meetings are chaired by elected Youth Chairperson and the council also includes sub-groups or committees focused on particular themes like mental health, environment, or community safety.

### Consultation and Feedback

One of the core functions of the Youth Council is to gather opinions from young people across Oldham. Members conduct surveys, hold workshops and engage with their peers to understand their views on various topics. This feedback is then collated and presented to Oldham Council and other decision-makers.

## Advocacy and Influence

OYC members act as advocates for young people's interests. They ensure Oldham young people have a voice and influence by attending local government meetings, regional and national youth voice platforms such as the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority, Youthforia (the North West regional youth voice network) and the UK Youth Parliament. Through their work they contribute to consultations on policy and service delivery and collaborate with community organisations. Their goal is to influence decisions that impact young people, such as education policies, youth services and public health initiatives.

## Key Achievements

In 2012 the Oldham Youth council became the first youth council in the UK to be formally recognised in a council's constitution and granted the right to present motions to full council meetings. They have used these powers to present a range of motions including:

- **Votes at 16:** The youth council have long supported the call for votes at 16, presenting a motion to ask the council to write to the Government in support of extending the electoral franchise to 16 and 17 year olds. They also co-authored a private members bill calling for Votes at 16 with their local MP, Jim McMahon.
- **Stationery Campaign:** Aimed at addressing the lack of essential school supplies among students during the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Vaping Awareness Campaign:** Focused on educating peers on the risks associated with vaping and to request the council writes to the Government in support of banning disposable vapes.
- **Free School Meals:** Advocating for increased eligibility for free school meals and the continuation of the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) program.

In 2018 they became the first local youth council to receive the Queens Award for Voluntary Services in recognition of their work in Oldham.

152. We have also outlined our ambition to **grow the Cadet Forces programme by 30% across the UK by 2030** and align Ministry of Defence future growth plans in places with highest deprivation levels and the weakest social infrastructure, including Pride in Place Programme places. This will help increase young people's performance at school and improve their employment and career prospects, giving them more opportunity and agency over their lives. This will augment the Government's ongoing school-based Cadet Expansion Programme which is a joint Department for Education and Ministry of Defence programme that has already doubled the number of state schools with cadet units and continues to focus on less affluent areas.

## Building capacity and partnerships

153. There is significant appetite for greater local control and influence at a local level. Residents and organisations want to drive positive change in their neighbourhoods, but often feel that they don't have the skills, knowledge or time that they need to really make a difference locally.

154. Those skills, knowledge and time are often most strained or lacking in places that would benefit most from communities coming together to act. For those communities across England with the highest levels of deprivation and lowest social capital, we are **launching a new £175m Community Wealth Fund** (CWF), alongside DCMS, to build community power. This is funded through £87.5 million from the Dormant Assets Scheme, alongside £87.5 million of match funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, the delivery body for the CWF. The Fund will give between £1 million and £2.5 million over ten years directly to communities to spend on what they identify as most needed in their local area, such as after-school clubs, employment support, community facilities and improvements to the look and feel of the neighbourhood. This funding will be backed up by wrap-around support to develop local confidence and capacity. Residents will be supported to identify local needs and make decisions about the future of their neighbourhood, and to develop local partnerships and achieve their goals. This will also help build communities' confidence and skills to get involved with other initiatives, including opportunities in the Pride in Place Programme and community funding in the future.
155. Meanwhile organisations all over the country are doing incredible work to build capacity and champion the voice of communities. We want to amplify this work, strengthen partnership working with communities at both a local and national level, and ensure communities have the support to take the lead on issues that matter to them.
156. We will **establish a Network for Neighbourhoods** across the UK to build connection and learning between community leaders, convene the partners that support and strengthen community organisations, groups and social clubs, and embed participatory approaches in how local decisions are made. With the Pride in Place Programme at its heart, the Network will share learning and best practice across Neighbourhood Boards and beyond, to support strong, capable and empowered communities to lead change locally.

“You don’t know what you don’t know... all the little things you have to do are a blocker to quick progress.”

**Focus group participant**

157. To reset the relationship between the Government and civil society, we have launched a **new Civil Society Covenant** to better harness the power of community organisations in the delivery of our Plan for Change.<sup>48</sup> This is a new model of partnership which encourages high quality, purposeful, collaborative working between government and civil society to inform decision-making and service design, delivering better solutions for all. It also provides greater opportunities for people to be involved in decisions and activities affecting their lives, where government and civil society enable increased involvement and representation. We will put this into action in the delivery of our Pride in Place Programme, supporting partnership working between residents, community organisations and local authorities to drive change and shape neighbourhoods together.

<sup>48</sup> Applies across the UK.

