

Local Trust
trusting
local
people



Left behind?

Understanding communities
on the edge

Executive summary

Local Trust

About this version

This is an executive summary, you can view the full report at bit.ly/LTLeftBehind

We published a first iteration of the OCSI research earlier this year, inviting comments from academics, researchers, people in government and those living and working in the communities Local Trust is engaged with. This consultation was very valuable. It enabled us to refine the methodology and identify additional or better data sources to illustrate area characteristics we were interested in. Thanks to everyone who participated.

Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge was researched by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) and published by Local Trust in August 2019. Local Trust is registered in England and Wales, charity number 1147511, company number 07833396. localtrust.org.uk

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Cover photo: East Cleveland Villages Big Local
Photo Credit: Jonathan Turner/Local Trust



About the research

The research described in this report was commissioned by Local Trust from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI). It was designed to explore the impact a lack of civic assets has in deprived communities across England.

Local Trust was set up by the National Lottery Community Fund in 2012 to deliver Big Local, a unique programme supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places where they live.

Funded by a £200m endowment - the largest ever single commitment of lottery funds - Big Local provides in excess of £1m of long-term funding over 10-15 years to each of 150 local communities, many of which face major social and economic challenges but have missed out on statutory and lottery funding in the past.

Through the delivery of the programme, Local Trust has, over the past seven years, gained direct and unique experience of the challenges faced by people trying to make a difference in their communities; the priorities they set for themselves when given choice about where resources should be allocated; and the issues that can prove challenging as they seek to achieve their aspirations. Factors that have emerged as of particular importance to local residents seeking to effect change in their neighbourhoods have, typically, included:

- places to meet, often communities that lack such places struggle to achieve impact
- connectivity, poor public transport and digital connectivity makes it difficult to build the partnerships which can serve to improve areas
- an active and engaged community, a community without existing activity can take a long time and require significant support to organise themselves to start to make a difference

The impact of these factors in Big Local areas led us to want to explore them beyond the confines of the programme, across England as a whole, both to generate insight to help us better support our areas and to cast light on the challenges deprived areas face.

Local Trust approached OCSI - the research and data consultancy who provide support to the UK Government in the development and maintenance of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) - to ask them to explore these factors.

Research findings

The research suggests that a lack of places to meet (whether community centres, pubs or village halls); the absence of an engaged and active community; and poor connectivity to the wider economy - physical and digital - make a significant difference to social and economic outcomes for deprived communities. Deprived areas which lack these assets have higher rates of unemployment, ill health and child poverty than other deprived areas. And they appear to be falling further behind them. This adds up to these areas being some of the most 'left behind'.

Our mapping shows that there is a concentration of such left-behind areas in post-industrial districts in northern England and in coastal areas in southern England. This was to be expected. What is notable is the extent to which this is also a phenomenon of post-war social housing estates on the peripheries of cities and towns. These are not the communities that have traditionally been the focus of debate about deprivation - these have tended to be multicultural and based in city centres.

The deterioration in the prospects of these left-behind areas is doubtless related to austerity and the cuts in public services and welfare benefits it ushered in. The research shows that these areas have suffered disproportionately. For example, despite their higher levels of need, average funding per head for local government services is lower than the average, not just for England but for deprived areas generally.

The analysis shows a strong correlation between a ward voting to leave the EU, and the lack of the three key factors we focus on in this report - places to meet, an engaged community and good connectivity. This might suggest that cultural and social factors - and the extent to which they have been neglected - may contribute significantly to how people feel about wider issues and, in particular, their satisfaction and engagement with the political process.

How can we start to turn back the tide?

This report makes three recommendations to government.

- To dedicate the estimated £2bn in dormant assets from stocks, bonds, shares, pension and insurance funds that will soon become available to the proposed Community Wealth Fund to support the development of civic assets, connection and community engagement in the most left-behind neighbourhoods

- To dedicate an appropriate portion of the £3.6bn Stronger Towns Fund and the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund to support community economic development in these neighbourhoods
- To establish a joint, cross-government/ civil society task force to consider evidence about and develop recommendations for how left-behind areas might be levelled up.

Our aspiration is to use this research as the foundation for a more in-depth programme of research and policy work, to develop more detailed proposals to improve the prospects of left-behind areas. We invite organisations and individuals interested in helping us to develop this programme to contact the policy team at Local Trust. To read the complete report visit bit.ly/LTLeftBehind

About OCSI

Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) work with public and community organisations to improve services. We turn complex datasets into engaging stories, and make data, information and analysis accessible for communities and decision-makers. A spin-out from Oxford University, we have helped 100s of public and community sector organisations to make their services more efficient and effective.

ocsi.co.uk

About Local Trust

Local Trust was established in 2012 to deliver Big Local, a unique programme that puts residents across the country in control of decisions about their own lives and neighbourhoods. Funded by a £200m endowment from the Big Lottery Fund - the largest ever single commitment of lottery funds - Big Local provides in excess of £1m of long-term funding over 10-15 years to each of 150 local communities, many of which face major social and economic challenges but have missed out on statutory and lottery funding in the past.

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